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Tice call to stop fighting climate crisis sparks fury

Reform deputy accused of misinformation as UK reels from wildfires

Kiran Stacey
Policy editor

Reform UK’s deputy leader has been accused of spreading misinformation after he dismissed efforts to tackle the climate crisis and urged British people to enjoy the warmth of the recent heatwaves.

Richard Tice prompted a backlash from nurses, medical experts and green campaigners yesterday after he told a press conference he believed it was “arrogant” to try to stop the climate emergency, while encouraging people to focus on upsides such as better English wine.

Asked about the recent extreme heat, Tice told a press conference: “Of course, the climate changes, but where is the evidence that net zero is going to stop it? Where is the evidence? There is no evidence. Climate change has always happened. It always will. Maybe the smarter thing to do is to adapt to it than think arrogantly that you can stop it.”

◀ *Richard Tice said yesterday: ‘When it’s a bit warm, let’s enjoy it. If it means English wine gets better, fantastic’*

He added: “When it’s a bit warm, let’s enjoy it. And if it means that English wine and sparkling wine gets better and better, fantastic. That means we can take on the French - fantastic. Let’s celebrate some of these things rather than just be sort of doom and gloom about it.”

Bridget Phillipson, the Labour party chair, said: “Richard Tice’s comments are tone-deaf. With wildfires raging across the UK and drought threatening water supplies and food security, comments like these don’t just raise serious questions about his judgment - they also expose where his interests really lie.”

A record-breaking summer has seen temperatures rising above 35C several times, causing thousands of deaths, millions of hospital visits and costing the UK an estimated £4bn in economic output.

The government has estimated that 2,877 people died as a result of high temperatures

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Rest in power Professor Jason Arday
Rest in power Professor Jason Arday

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS J RATCLIFFE/REUTERS

Tens of thousands gathered in London last night to pay tribute to Jason Arday, who was found dead on Friday. He had resigned as a Cambridge professor after allegations of plagiarism, which he denied. **News** *Page 2* →

Trump says he’ll bomb Oman if it gets in way of Iran deal

Joseph Gedeon and Andrew Roth *Washington*

Donald Trump has again threatened to bomb Oman if it “gets in the way” of his attempts to end the US-Israel war on Iran, as the two-month window to negotiate peace with Iran expired with no end to the conflict in sight.

The latest threat against Oman, which is not a party to the war, has illustrated how Trump’s unpredictable and often outrageous approach to diplomacy has upset US partners and failed to achieve the breakthrough that he has promised to end the war.

“If Oman gets in the way, we’ll bomb the shit out of them,” Trump told Fox News yesterday. It is the second time he has directed such a threat at Muscat, a longtime US strategic partner that has traditionally served as a key backchannel between Washington and Tehran.

The various conflicts in the Middle East continued on multiple fronts yesterday as Yemen’s Iran-aligned Houthis claimed to target military ships from Saudi Arabia - a US ally - in a missile and drone strike in the Red Sea.

Saudi officials did not confirm the attack, which the Houthis said had struck a Saudi military ship and four escort vessels.

The strikes took place at a port close to the Bab-al Mandeb strait, an important global shipping route that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

Trump has staked the political legacy of his second term as president on being the “peacemaker-in-chief”, but his efforts to disengage the US from conflicts across the Middle East are stalling.

His threat against Oman comes as he is struggling to draw the Iran conflict to a conclusion, almost six months after it was launched, and as a diplomatic window agreed with Tehran ran out with no final agreement in sight.

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Rest in power Professor Jason Arday

◀ *Mourners at the vigil for Jason Arday, above, the Cambridge professor who was found dead on Friday*
PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS J RATCLIFFE/REUTERS

Tens of thousands remember late academic Arday at vigil in London

Rachel Hall

Tens of thousands of people gathered in Trafalgar Square in London last night to remember and pay tribute to Jason Arday.

Stand Up to Racism, which organised the vigil, estimated that 30,000 mourners had gathered in the square to listen to emotional speeches from MPs, friends and campaigners on Arday’s life and legacy and join in a minute’s silence.

Many were dressed in black and held flowers, which they were asked to leave in the square.

Arday, 41, was pronounced dead after emergency services were called to his home in south London on Friday. He had just resigned from his role as professor of sociology of education at Cambridge, after widespread press coverage of accusations of plagiarism, which he rejected, and inconsistencies in statements about his career and achievements.

Opening the event, Bell Ribeiro-Addy, the Labour MP for Clapham and Brixton Hill, said: “I’m going to look around you and look at how many people have come tonight.

“That tells you what Jason meant. He held doors open behind him. He kept them open and thousands of us walked through. That is why this place is full tonight. And I know that all of you are grieving. I know there are many people that aren’t even here,” said Ribeiro-Addy.

The evening also featured live performances by the British star Beverley Knight of her song Keep This Fire Burning, and a cover of Coldplay’s Fix You, which was requested by Arday’s family.

Many speeches focused on the role of the media in Arday’s death. Diane Abbott, the MP for Hackney North, said: “He must have felt that if he resigned, the attacks on him would stop. But in fact, they got even worse … This is a vicious campaign.”

The Windrush campaigner Patrick Vernon said the evening was the time to “pay our respects and to stand in solidarity with his grieving family”.

“Let’s remember his life, his scholarship, his achievements, his determination and his humanity and the people that he inspired,” he said.

But he added that it would be important to reflect on the role of “racism, institutional responsibility, accountability and the treatment of black families and black men” in Arday’s death, as well as why the “duty of care” to an autistic man known to be vulnerable had been failed, potentially through a public inquiry.

Dawn Butler, the Labour MP for Brent East, said: “I‘m sorry because I think we let him down. I let him down.

“And I’m sorry to the family, but we couldn’t protect him. But now is the time for unity. Now is the time for us to ensure that we have sustainable change.”

Samira Ali, an organiser of Stand Up to Racism, read out a statement from a close friend and colleague of Arday, which said: “Professor Jason, the words kind, beautiful and gentle seem to orbit so many dedications to him and they are not wrong.

“But in truth, words will never quite capture the type of person Professor Jason was or what he meant to people.”

The statement referenced Arday’s work setting up mentoring schemes and mental health support for students and academics of colour. It read: “He worked tirelessly to inspire all students from marginalised backgrounds to believe that academia could also belong to them.

“He did not inspire one or two people to do a PhD. There are dozens of us over generations who have dreamed and are now doctors and soon to be professors because of him.”

Public support

Cash raised for family shows UK ‘still cares’

Sally Weale

A Windrush campaigner behind a fundraiser for Jason Arday’s family has said the outpouring of support shows “Britain still cares”.

Arday, who was found dead on Friday, had resigned the previous week from his post as professor of sociology of education at the University of Cambridge after allegations of plagiarism were made against him.

A vigil for the professor, organised by the group Stand Up to Racism, was held on the steps of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, central London, yesterday evening.

Calls are growing for an investigation into media reporting of the case. An open letter to Andy Burnham demanding a public inquiry “to ensure we never see a tragic death like Dr Arday’s again” has gathered more than 85,000 names.

Stand Up To Racism
Rest in power Professor Jason Arday

◀ *A vigil organised by Stand Up to Racism was held outside the National Gallery in central London*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALISHIA ABODUNDE/GETTY

The prime minister is said to be open to the idea and has not ruled out “Leveson 2” - the planned second part of the inquiry into British press standards, which was cancelled in 2018. He has stressed, however, that now is a time for reflection while the usual processes - such as an inquest - are followed and concluded.

Earlier, Cambridge’s chancellor, Chris Smith, described what he called a “racist feeding frenzy” around the academic’s death.

On Saturday, Sir Patrick Vernon, who played a leading role in the successful campaign to establish a national Windrush Day and is also among the letter’s signatories, set up a GoFundMe crowdfunding page, which has collected more than £160,000.

He told the Press Association the outpouring of support shows that the public “still cares” and feels “angry”.

“Britain still cares - people, black, white, brown, care and feel angry about the situation,” he said.

“People want to support the family. There’s lots of speculation about how much money Jason has or doesn’t have - that’s not the point. The fact is, people want to support the family because he’s dead, he’s died and he has a young family.

“He has parents and he has a family that he has supported, and people want to support the family.”

Vernon said the treatment of Arday raised questions around press regulation, the University of Cambridge and the “state of race relations in Britain today”.

Before Arday’s death, Cambridge said it would investigate the circumstances around his “appointment and tenure” and that the findings would feed into a review of the process for appointing senior roles.

It is understood the university does not feel it is right to make a decision on whether to proceed with its investigation while Arday’s family are grieving.

Smith said: “I do believe it is possible to hold to two principles at the same time: to believe in the importance of academic integrity, and where criticisms of plagiarism arise, about any academic, whoever they are, ensure that they are rigorously investigated. And also to refuse to join in a racist feeding frenzy over a particular academic.”

Downing Street declined to say “at this stage” whether the prime minister was considering an inquiry.

Bulgarians baffled Eurovision 2027 to be hosted in Burgas, not capital Sofia

The final will take place on 15 May

Eden Maclachlan
Sofia

Ever since the Bulgarian singer Dara was crowned winner of the Eurovision song contest in May, it has been clear the Balkan nation would for the first time in its history have the opportunity to host Europe’s biggest party.

So when Bulgarian officials announced that the world’s largest live music event in 2027 will be held not in the capital, Sofia, but in Burgas, a Black Sea port city that is home to 210,000 people, it came as a surprise to this year’s winner.

“I am really surprised,” Dara told the Guardian. “I think that BNT [Bulgarian National Television] will do a great job at producing the whole show. I trust them completely. If they decided Burgas, then probably Burgas is better.”

This spring in Vienna, Dara became the first Bulgarian to win Eurovision with her high energy party anthem Bangaranga, in an edition boycotted by Ireland, Spain, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Iceland over Israel’s participation.

Following her victory, Bulgaria’s four largest cities, Sofia, Plovdiv, Dara’s home town of Varna and Burgas applied to host the contest. As the country’s capital and international hub, Sofia always seemed the obvious choice.

Many were taken aback by the choice of Burgas, Bulgaria’s fourth largest city. “We were surprised, because Sofia has the biggest arena,” said Pavel Stefanov, 29, an air traffic controller at Sofia airport.

> *‘I am really surprised. I trust them completely. If they decided Burgas, then probably Burgas is better’*

▶ *Dara celebrates after winning this year’s Eurovision song contest in Vienna in May*
PHOTOGRAPH: GEORG HOCHMUTH/APA/AFP/GETTY

▼ *The port city of Burgas beat off competition from three other Bulgarian cities, including the capital, Sofia, to host next year’s contest*
PHOTOGRAPH: D ZHELEVA/GETTY/ISTOCKPHOTO

Milena Ouzounova, 54, a designer from Sofia, was sceptical about Burgas’s capacity to pull it off: “I’m disappointed. I think Sofia is a better place, it is bigger, we have a big arena. Burgas is a nice place but I am not sure it could be prepared enough after one year.”

Located on the southern Black Sea coast, almost 400km east of Sofia, Burgas is closer to Istanbul than the Bulgarian capital.

Nestled among three lakes and the Black Sea, it has an established tourism industry and is a popular seaside destination for Bulgarian and international tourists. It is also home to Bulgaria’s second largest port and the largest oil refinery in southern Europe. This year, it hosted the arrival of the first stage of the Giro d’Italia, the Italian equivalent of the Tour de France.

Preparations to host Eurovision have already started around Arena Burgas, the 15,000-capacity concert hall completed in 2023 which will have the herculean task of throwing Europe’s biggest party, while the city’s airport said it was ready to welcome the increased passenger flow.

The accompanying Eurovision events will be in the centre of Burgas and the Sea Garden, the city’s biggest public park directly facing the Black Sea, where locals usually gather to hang out or enjoy a drink.

However, it isn’t the smallest city to host Eurovision, still considerably bigger than Harrogate, which staged it in 1982 following Bucks Fizz’s victory.

The Eurovision final will take place on 15 May, with the semi-finals on 11 and 13 May, and Canada will participate for the first time. New rules will be implemented such as increasing the minimum participation age from 16 to 18 and potentially barring countries involved in armed conflicts from hosting.

Nuns fight ‘holy war’ against plans to take their beach club

Angela Giuffrida
Rome

A group of nuns are fighting plans to take their beach club from them – the latest flashpoint in the long-running debate about the monopoly of private concessions along Italy’s coastline.

The dispute, described as “a holy war” in the local press, unfolded when a 50-metre stretch of sand at Bagni Gino Garrone, a beach resort in the town of Spotorno managed by nuns from the Suore di Carità di Santa Maria order, was designated for public bidding by local authorities as they seek to comply with EU beach concession laws as well as regional regulations on free beach quotas.

The nuns have been managing the resort since 1946 after being exempt from standard commercial rules because they were using the proceeds for charitable purposes, including funding an infant school they still run in Spotorno and a summer beach camp.

For decades they have rented out loungers and umbrellas, so operating much like thousands of other private beach concessions, the difference being – they claim – that the proceeds fund their charitable activities.

However, with the regulation governing beach use for social missions no longer existing, the nuns were told by Spotorno’s mayor, Mattia Fiorini, that the concession would be reclassified as a “free equipped beach” and if they wanted to continue running it they would have to compete in a public tender.

During a public debate on the topic, Sister Miranda, in her 80s, challenged Fiorini. “It’s ours,” she was quoted as saying by the Turin edition of Corriere della Sera. “Why does the municipality want to take away our beach? If they do, we won’t even be able to keep the school running.”

▲ *The beach in Spotorno, on Italy’s Ligurian coast, is highly sought after*

Operating it as a “free equipped beach”, meaning access is completely free and people can choose to pay a small sum to rent loungers and umbrellas if they wish, would be considerably less profitable, the nuns argued.

Fiorini said if they wanted to continue managing the concession “they must participate in the tender, like everyone else”. The tender is due to be issued in the autumn.

The mayor’s plan means Spotorno could be among the first municipalities in Italy to meet a 30 June 2027 deadline for the country to put its current private beach concessions out to public tender, as per the EU’s Bolkestein directive.

Virgin Trains takes step closer to running services to Europe in blow to Eurostar

Lauren Almeida

Virgin Trains has been granted track access by the rail regulator to enable it to run services between London and Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam from 2030, in a key step towards breaking Eurostar's monopoly on the cross-Channel passenger route.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) said it had given approval for Richard Branson's company to run as many as 20 daily return services using the High Speed 1 line between London St Pancras and the Channel tunnel.

The agreement for the period between 1 October 2030 to 31 December 2040 means Virgin Trains has passed another important regulatory hurdle towards starting the international services. However, it only covers the HS1 route and Virgin still needs to secure access to the tunnel and rail networks in mainland Europe.

Last October Virgin was granted access to share Eurostar's Temple Mills depot in east London to maintain and store trains, the only depot that can be accessed from HS1.

Eurostar, which was formerly part-owned by the UK taxpayer but is now controlled by the French rail operator SNCF, has held a monopoly on passenger services through the tunnel since it opened in 1994. Eurotunnel, operator of LeShuttle, takes vehicles on the cross-Channel route.

▲ *Illustration of a Virgin train at St Pancras International station*

Eurostar has previously faced criticism over its high prices, and shrunk its network over the past decade, ditching international services from Ashford and Ebbsfleet in Kent.

Branson has previously said it was "time to end this 30-year monopoly and bring some Virgin magic to the cross-Channel route". Virgin plans to run services between St Pancras and the same stations in Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam used by Eurostar.

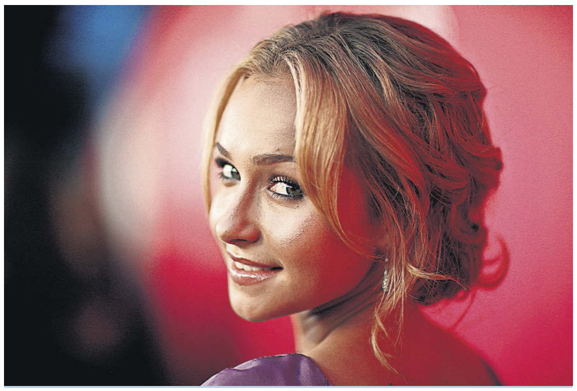
It comes as demand for international rail travel from the UK grows, with Eurostar announcing last year that it would start running double-decker trains through the tunnel, while a joint UK-German taskforce considers plans for direct trains from London to Berlin.

The ORR said its latest decision to grant track access was "an important next step", but that there was "still more work to do" before the new services could run. The ORR's deputy director of access and international, Martin Jones, said: "This is an important next step in bringing competition and growth to the market for international rail services, and we welcome the progress Virgin Trains and London St Pancras High Speed have made. While there is still more work to do, we are supporting Virgin and the wider industry to grow international services."

For example, Virgin Trains must secure access to other rail networks and obtain safety approvals from the ORR and relevant regulators in the EU ahead of plans to run services in 2030.

Virgin, which previously ran intercity trains in Britain including between London and Glasgow, has said it plans to invest £700m in its cross-Channel project and create about 400 jobs in the UK.

A Virgin Group spokesperson said: "Our plans for a new London-Europe rail service from 2030 are moving at pace. We welcome the ORR's pre-approval of our track access agreement and the opportunity to bring competition and Virgin's award-winning customer experience to the Channel tunnel."



Hayden Panettiere, star of Nashville and Heroes, dies at the age of 36

Sian Cain

▶ *Panettiere as cheerleader Claire Bennet in Heroes – the hit show that brought her to global attention; and, above, in 2009*

PHOTOGRAPHS: NBC/UNIVERSAL TV/KOBAL/SHUTTERSTOCK; MARIO ANZUONI/REUTERS

Hayden Panettiere, the actor known for her roles in television shows such as Heroes and Nashville, has died at the age of 36.

Her father, Skip Panettiere, said: "It is with profound sadness that we share the tragic passing of our beloved Hayden. She was an incredible light and a force of nature who brought immeasurable love and joy to all who knew her – and to the millions who watched her onscreen."

He asked for privacy "as our family takes time to process this unimaginable loss".

Born in 1989, Panettiere was a child star who began acting at just 11 months old, appearing in a toy commercial. She made her big screen debut as the voice of Dot in A Bug's Life at the age of nine.

In 2000, she appeared in the sports drama film Remember the Titans. In 2004, she landed her first starring role as the daughter of Bill Pullman's character in Tiger Cruise on the Disney Channel.

Panettiere rose to global fame at the age of 17 as the invulnerable cheerleader Claire Bennet in Heroes, a series with the well-known, mysterious mantra: "Save the cheerleader, save the world."

Panettiere also earned two Golden Globe nominations for her performance as the troubled country music star Juliette Barnes on Nashville. Eleven songs that she recorded for the show appeared on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart.

She also appeared as Kirby Reed in 2011's Scream 4 and 2023's Scream VI.

In 2014, she gave birth to her daughter, Kaya Klitschko, with her ex-fiance Wladimir Klitschko, the Ukrainian heavyweight boxing champion. Panettiere gave full custody to Klitschko in 2018 in order to focus on recovering from what she called a "horrible cycle for years of battling depression and anxiety and alcoholism and substance abuse".

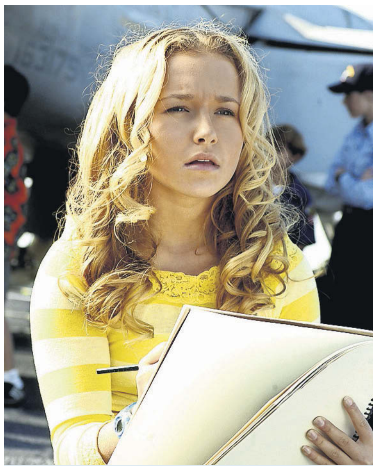
"I didn't know where the alcoholism was ending and the postpartum was beginning," she said in 2022. "And I ran myself pretty ragged."

She entered rehab in 2015 while filming Nashville, which was to inform some of the show's storylines.

"This hasn't been easy and there were a lot of ups and downs," Panettiere told People magazine in 2022. "But I don't regret even the ugliest things that have happened to me. I feel incredibly accomplished."

This year she published a memoir titled This is Me: A Reckoning, which touched on her struggles with fame, postpartum depression, addiction and recovery. In it she wrote of the troubling link she made between acting and love: "Directors, fans, and Mom praised me endlessly for my over-the-top dramatic responses. Subconsciously, I began to associate catastrophe with adoration; people loved me because make-believe bad things happened to me."

▲ *Panettiere with the father of her child, Wladimir Klitschko, in 2011; and, below, in her first starring role in Disney's Tiger Cruise, 2004*



In May, she spoke to the podcaster Jay Shetty about her daughter, saying: "I always want to have my arms wrapped around her, but that's just not the way life is right at this moment … I have faith that she is going to come to me and that we're going to have an incredible relationship and bond and friendship that a lot of parents don't get to have with their kids."

Panettiere is survived by her father and her mother, Lesley Vogel. Panettiere's brother Jansen died in 2023 at the age of 28 from heart problems.

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Queen of the screen
Visitors at a celebration of Madonna's 68th birthday in central London. The interactive installation, C'mon Meet Me on the Dancefloor, at Outernet London, combines music, visual storytelling and fan participation.

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES KLUG/ GETTY IMAGES

Sainsbury's store pauses AI scans after ejecting shopper

Helena Horton

Sainsbury's has paused the use of AI face scanning in one of its stores after a customer was wrongly identified as a shoplifter and ejected from the shop.

"I was embarrassed – mortified even – and felt quite humiliated and powerless," Matt Arnold, 46, said of his ordeal.

The comedy promoter was buying supplies in the store in East Dulwich, south-east London, for a standup event at Dulwich Hamlet football club when, after scanning his items and a Nectar card, he was approached by two managers who told him he could not be served owing to an earlier incident. He was then asked to leave and they tried to escort him from the store.

"They simply told me they would be walking me out," Arnold said. "At that point I did stand my ground and said I would be walking myself out. I was determined to keep some dignity. On this point, if nothing else, they did relent."

As he left, he saw an overhead CCTV monitor alert with a red circle surrounding his face. He asked the shop staff to keep his shopping in the trolley so his friend could pick up the supplies for the comedy night.

"I think they were quite confused by this, understandably, but agreed and my colleague Dave went in to pay for and pick up the shop about five minutes later. There was no pause for thought from the staff, no suggestion that they understood this is not how a shoplifter would behave. Just blindly following the machine's orders."

Sainsbury's head office apologised to Arnold the next day and has paused use of its AI-assisted Facewatch technology in the store while an investigation takes place.

Arnold said: "Anyone could be falsely accused and at some point that will be someone vulnerable, someone with mental health issues like anxiety. It's inevitable.

"Also, I would worry about the confidence-destroying effect of it happening to a younger person or someone less willing or able to stand up for themselves."

The supermarket chain uses facial recognition technology to identify shoplifters and other criminals, and says this is to keep staff safe from abuse. But the tech has been plagued with issues. Last September another shopper, Warren Rajah, was ordered out of a branch in Elephant and Castle, south London, after being wrongly identified by the same software. Similar cases have occurred in Home Bargains and B&M stores.

Arnold said: "Sainsbury's, and indeed any other company using Facewatch, should disable it immediately, at least until they can guarantee the system works flawlessly. They have announced that they are suspending the surveillance in the East Dulwich store … but it's a centralised system, so why not suspend it in every store? If there is a potential problem in East Dulwich – be it with the AI itself or the implementation of it – there are potential problems in all the stores."

He added that he was concerned about the rise of AI in society. "I don't like surveillance culture, but I can see how at times it is necessary. What isn't necessary is allowing machines to make decisions and then expect humans to scuttle off and do their bidding unquestioningly."

A Sainsbury's spokesperson said: "We have contacted Mr Arnold to apologise for his experience at our Dulwich superstore. The incident was caused by human error, not the facial recognition technology. Customers can be reassured that the Facewatch system has a 99.98% accuracy rate, and every match is reviewed by a trained manager."

A Facewatch spokesperson said the technology was not at fault in this case. "A correct alert was sent to the retailer, but was subsequently subject to human error in the way it was handled in store," they said.

The company said suspending a store was a "precautionary measure" to prevent further alerts while staff underwent additional training.

Sainsbury's said alerts remained visible on staff devices for up to an hour and it logged all misidentifications.

> *'There was no pause for thought … They were just blindly following the machine's orders'*

Matt Arnold
Sainsbury's customer

Ministers drop plan to relax affordable housing rules after backlash

Kiran Stacey
Policy editor

Ministers have dropped plans to relax affordable housing rules for developers in England after a backlash from housing experts who warned it could drastically cut the number of cheaper homes available in rural areas.

The government said it would not go ahead with proposals to end affordable housing quotas for private builders on sites of between 10 and 49 houses after a consultation triggered an overwhelmingly negative response.

The change, which was included in the government's 150-page planning reform document published yesterday, is one of the most significant reversals ministers have made to housing policy since Andy Burnham became prime minister.

Kate Henderson, the chief executive of the National Housing Federation (NHF), said: "It's extremely positive to see that the government has listened to the social housing sector and decided against removing onsite affordable housing requirements on medium-sized development sites.

"This decision will safeguard one of the most important routes for delivering social homes in rural areas, ensuring we can build genuinely affordable homes where people need them, in every postcode across the country."

Under the original proposals, ministers would have allowed developers to make cash payments instead of building affordable housing onsite if their developments were between 10 and 49 houses.

Ministers hoped the measures might help boost sluggish rates of housebuilding. But housing experts said such a rule change would have a major impact, especially in rural areas, where a significant number of affordable homes are built on medium sites rather than larger ones.

The government document reveals that of the 910 people and groups who responded to the consultation, 41% were strongly opposed to the measure, with just 18% strongly in favour. The document said: "There was significant opposition across stakeholder groups."

It added: "The government has considered these responses and has decided not to proceed with proposals to allow applicants discretion to deliver social and affordable housing requirements via cash payments in lieu of on-site delivery on medium sites."

ENDING BENEFITS
BRITAIN

▼ *Richard Tice and Robert Jenrick detailing £50bn of cuts to benefits for disabled people and foreign nationals* PHOTOGRAPH: STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA

Stop fighting climate crisis and enjoy the heatwaves, says Tice

Continued *from page 1*

during the May and June heatwaves - dou ble the figure for the whole of last summer.

The climate breakdown has been linked to the increasing frequency of wildfires, which are burning larger areas across many parts of the world. The so-called firewave in the UK weeks ago was the most widespread the country has seen, with the combination of wet winters and prolonged heatwaves exacerbating the risk.

New figures published in the Lancet show older people are affected by the heat at lower temperatures than previously thought, while medical professionals say they are struggling to deal with the surge in patients.

A spokesperson for the Royal College of Nursing said: "Those calling for people to enjoy the impacts of climate change should say it to the nurses collapsing in hospitals where temperatures are hitting 36 degrees. Or to the thousands of patients lining corridors every day as extreme heat causes severe illness among the vulnerable, older people and even those without pre-existing conditions.

"Climate change is a public health emergency that's getting worse … The nursing profession doesn't want out of touch interventions, but action to reduce emissions and make NHS and care facilities safe to work and be cared for in."

Simon Williams, a public health researcher at Swansea University, said: "It's concerning to see someone so high profile spreading misinformation around climate change and its impacts. Particularly for the elderly, heatwaves over time make them less capable of regulating their body temperature. Even a few degrees either way can have a major impact."

Caroline Abrahams, the charity director of Age UK, called the new findings into the impact of heat on older people "alarming", adding: "This study means there's now no denying that extreme heat poses a very real health threat to our older population."

The National Farmers' Union meanwhile has said farmers are facing "one of the worst ever" harvests, while firefighters have battled wildfires in Derbyshire, the Midlands, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Reform UK has long campaigned to scrap the government's commitment to reaching net zero by 2050 and has promised to end green subsidies if elected. The party has taken tens of millions of pounds in donations from people with connections to the fossil fuel industry since it was set up in 2019, most notably from the billionaire Christopher Harborne, who owns a jet fuel brokerage and whose £5m gift to Nigel Farage is now at the centre of a parliamentary inquiry.

While Farage has questioned the role that human activity has played in changing the climate, his deputy leader has been more outspoken in denying that the planet is experiencing a climate crisis at all.

He posted in 2024: "We are not in climate emergency; nor is there a climate crisis. But yes, climate change is real because it has happened for millions of years past & will do in future."

Yesterday he called on the government to invest in desalination plants, which he said worked well in the Middle East, where he spends much of his time. "Where's been the discussion about desalination plants that are used in other parts of the world very, very successfully?" he said. "Yeah, there's not much water on land in the Middle East. They use desalination plants. We're surrounded by water. It is too difficult to build a reservoir - let's look at desalination plants."

> *'We are not in climate emergency; nor is there a climate crisis'*
>
> **Richard Tice**
> *Posting on X in 2024*

Last week the Guardian reported Thames Water was preparing the UK's only mainland desalination plant to restart operations later this year - but it will not be ready until the winter.

Alasdair Johnstone, head of parliamentary engagement at the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit, said: "Far from being an enjoyable experience, for many this summer will have brought hardship, with 2,877 deaths during the May and June heatwaves, over 1,100 of which are directly attributable to the extra heat added by climate change. Firefighters have been called to over 1,000 wildfires, which have devastated the landscape, displaced people, and destroyed homes.

"The only way these climate change impacts can be prevented from becoming more common and severe is to tackle the cause, which means reaching net zero emissions by 2050."

Amy Cameron, a programme director for Greenpeace UK, said: "Reform should try telling nurses fainting on shifts, farmers losing their crops and people running from burning homes to enjoy the hot weather and see what reaction they'll get."

Additional reporting
Denis Campbell *and* **Ajit Niranjan**

Welfare
Reform cuts plan would 'destroy the safety net'

Patrick Butler
Kiran Stacey

Hundreds of thousands of children would be tipped into poverty under plans unveiled by Reform to slash £50bn a year from the UK benefits bill, campaigners have warned.

The warnings came after Reform published plans to drastically reduce disability payments, ban non-UK citizens from claiming benefits and introduce compulsory 20 hours a week unpaid workfare for thousands of long-term unemployed people.

An overhaul of the sick pay system would require employers to cover an employee's benefit payments for the first two years of their illness, the plans propose, while the two-child benefit limit scrapped by Labour last year would be reintroduced.

A leaked government analysis shows that cuts to disability benefits would be so steep even those with terminal illness, blindness or profound learning disabilities would lose as much as £10,000 per year.

Campaigners said the wide-ranging proposals were "cruel and dangerous", with one poverty charity saying: "This will cause horrific levels of destitution and hardship."

Attempts to overhaul the benefits system have proved politically controversial in recent years - last year Keir Starmer's government was forced to abandon relatively modest proposals to cut £5bn a year from disability benefits after a backbench rebellion, and was forced to abandon its plans to keep the two-child limit.

The plans began to unravel after the consequences of cuts to disability benefits became apparent, with some low-income households facing cuts to incomes of up to £10,000 a year, and poverty rates projected to increase by around 250,000.

The consequences of Reform's plans in its own electoral heartlands could also prove problematic. House of Commons figures show one in six (15.3%) working-age adults in Reform leader Nigel Farage's Clacton constituency claim personal independence payments (Pip), almost twice the England and Wales average.

A foreword by Farage and the party's Treasury spokesperson, Robert Jenrick, said the plans were built on "common-sense principles", adding: "A system intended as a safety net has become a way of life, including for foreigners who haven't paid a penny."

Among their proposals is replacing Pip and part of the universal credit with a single flat-rate "health security allowance" of £429.80 a month. For those with severe needs, an internal government analysis shows this would be more than £10,000 less than they currently receive in a year.

Jenrick said yesterday that the most vulnerable needs would be protected, while the party has said disabled people could claim for the genuine extra costs of their disabilities. He could not say, however, how those costs would be assessed.

A Labour source said: "This analysis exposes the true impact of Reform's welfare proposals. Far from securing the welfare system for the future, Reform would destroy the safety net that millions of British people have depended on."

The Disability Benefits Consortium, representing more than 150 charities, said Reform's plans would "vastly increase poverty and worsen people's health" by stripping disability benefits from millions.

Disability Rights UK said Reform's failure to understand the importance of disability benefits to the lives of disabled people was "utterly breathtaking". The charity Scope accused it of "pushing disabled people into poverty and calling it compassion".

Around 1.3m non-UK citizens currently claim universal credit, of whom about 650,000 are not in employment, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies. The amount of money that would be saved by barring non-UK citizens from benefits would depend on how many responded by claiming citizenship, it said.

Tom Waters, an associate director at the IFS, said: "Removing benefits from non-UK citizens would mean large overnight cuts to claimants' incomes and imply significant increases in hardship - some of this group get most or all of their income from benefits at present."

Reform said its plans would push an additional 241,000 British nationals into jobs by the end of the decade while cutting about a quarter the UK's annual working-age benefits bill.

State pensions would be entirely insulated from cuts, it said, and similar protections would be in place for what it called the "severely disabled".

Kate Lee, the chief executive of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, said such a programme could undermine trust between charities and the communities they serve.

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ALL DISABLE LIVES MATTER
CUTS
STOP THE CUTS
# TAKINGTHEPIP

◀ *Campaigners have called the proposals, which include replacing Pip and part of the universal credit with a flat-rate allowance, 'cruel and dangerous'*

PHOTOGRAPH: WIKTOR SZYMANOWICZ/ FUTURE PUBLISHING/ GETTY IMAGES

◀ *The 211 signatories to the letter include, clockwise from top left, Anoushka Shankar, Thom Yorke, Paris Paloma and Brian Eno*

North Sea oil
Musicians ask PM to reject new drilling

Lauren Almeida

More than 200 musicians including Massive Attack and Brian Eno have written to Andy Burnham urging him to reject plans for more oil and gas drilling in the North Sea.

The letter, signed by 211 artists such as Olly Alexander and Paris Paloma, called on the prime minister to reject the Rosebank oilfield, warning that it would fail to lower energy bills or provide energy security as most of the oil was likely to be exported.

Other performers who put their names to the missive include Radiohead's Thom Yorke, Ed O'Brien and Philip Selway; the Cure's Robert Smith; Bobby Gillespie of Primal Scream; Alexis Taylor of Hot Chip; Anoushka Shankar, Kevin Rowland, Anna Calvi, Jacob Collier, David Gray, the electronic duo Bicep and the xx singer Romy.

The government's consultation on the project, about 80 miles north-west of the Shetland Islands, closed yesterday. Ministers will now decide on its future as well as that of the Jackdaw gasfield off Aberdeen, whose consultation concluded a week ago.

Adura, the company behind both projects, has said they would result in £10.8bn in investment and support 3,500 jobs at the peak of construction, with 880 employees over the production lifetime.

However, environmental activists argue that extracting fossil fuels from the UK's largest remaining untapped oilfield will accelerate climate chaos. Estimates suggest Rosebank could produce more than 250m tonnes of CO_2 over its lifetime, equivalent to 70% of the UK's annual emissions.

The artists wrote in their letter: "The climate crisis is no longer something we fear for future generations; it is shaping our lives today. Heatwaves are disrupting schools, workplaces, hospitals, transport networks, festivals and live events."

Eno, who is a co-founder of the campaign group EarthPercent, said Burnham had previously stood with artists and campaigners calling for an end to fossil fuel expansion.

"So he has a choice to make," Eno said. "He can stand with the fossil fuel industry and approve Rosebank, or he can stand with the people who will live with the consequences of that decision.

"We are already seeing what a hotter world looks like, with record heat and devastating wildfires across Britain and Europe. At this point, continuing to expand fossil fuel production isn't pragmatism, it's a failure to face reality."

The Met Office has said this summer in the UK is on course to be the hottest since records began.

Extreme heat has driven a surge in attendance at hospital emergency departments over the summer, with more than 2.4 million patients attending each month in May, June and July - the three highest monthly totals ever recorded.

A Department for Energy Security and Net Zero spokesperson said: "The North Sea remains a vital national asset, supporting jobs, growth and the UK's energy security. We are clear that oil and gas will continue to play an important role in our energy system for decades to come, alongside transitioning to clean power to protect jobs and tackle the climate crisis."

Security
Burnham contacted by fake Trump chief of staff

Kevin Rawlinson
Kiran Stacey
Aletha Adu

At least three UK cabinet ministers have had their personal mobile phone numbers published online, amid mounting concern over the security of senior politicians after Andy Burnham was targeted by an impersonation scam.

The defence secretary, Wes Streeting, justice secretary, Alex Norris, and Northern Ireland secretary, Chris Bryant, all had their numbers available online alongside their names.

A reference containing Streeting's number has since been removed, a source told the Guardian, noting he does all his official business on his government phone. Officials are understood to be working to take down the others.

The leak, first revealed by Politico, came after Burnham exchanged messages with someone posing as Donald Trump's chief of staff, Susie Wiles.

The prime minister was in contact with an unknown individual pretending to be Wiles before concerns were raised about the incident. No messages of significance were sent and the suspicious activity was quickly reported to the appropriate authorities, it is understood.

The British embassy in Washington was so concerned it raised the matter with the White House, according to Politico. A UK government spokesperson said: "We do not comment on national security matters."

Downing Street refused to say whether any measures had been taken to prevent another breach. No 10 refused to say whether Burnham was embarrassed that he had communicated with the imposter, and declined to say whether the messages were exchanged on WhatsApp.

Last year, the Wall Street Journal reported that the FBI had launched an investigation into efforts to access Wiles's phone after an unknown person pretending to be her contacted prominent Republicans and business chiefs.

There have been security concerns related to Trump's White House, with the president's personal phone number common knowledge among reporters covering US politics.

In December 2025, a US defence department report concluded Trump's defence secretary, Pete Hegseth, had endangered the lives of US service personnel when he discussed a military operation with fellow senior US officials in a group chat to which a journalist had been added.

Bus pass for disabled '24/7'

Disabled people across England will be able to use their free bus passes at any time of day from next April, as Andy Burnham expands a policy he introduced as mayor of Greater Manchester.

The passes are currently valid only between 9.30am and 11pm on weekdays, although some councils pay to allow people free travel outside those hours.

The prime minister is putting £60m towards the change. He is in the second week of his summer tour, during which he is focusing on the cost of living. The bus pass policy has been in place in Greater Manchester since March.

"Buses are a lifeline for so many people - making it easier to get to work, education and healthcare," Burnham said. "It's simply not right that many disabled people cannot travel using their pass during certain times of the day. So we're fixing that. Disabled people will now have unlimited free bus travel 24/7." Aletha Adu

◀ *Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, left, in talks with Israel's president, Isaac Herzog, yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: SHALEV SHALOM/ANADOLU/GETTY

No breakthrough for Kushner as Netanyahu insists Hamas disarm

Peter Beaumont

Benjamin Netanyahu has told Donald Trump's son-in-law and envoy Jared Kushner there can be no progress on the stalled Gaza ceasefire deal or an Israeli withdrawal from the coastal strip until Hamas first disarms.

An Israeli official said there had been no breakthrough in the meeting between the pair, saying Netanyahu had made it clear the IDF would not withdraw and would continue to carry out operations in Gaza.

On Sunday, Kushner had met Hamas's political chief in Egypt, where Hamas insisted Israel must first withdraw its troops from the 60% of Gaza that Israel occupies.

Yesterday's three-hour meeting in Israel came after Netanyahu had forcefully rejected a week earlier the US-backed 15-point roadmap to move the ceasefire deal in Gaza forward.

In the meeting with Kushner, Netanyahu again insisted there could be no Israeli withdrawal or reconstruction without full Hamas disarmament, and the Israeli prime minister requested that a US general supervise the handover of weapons.

A statement from Netanyahu's office said: "The prime minister and Board of Peace had deep and constructive discussions. It was agreed to establish two working groups, one on disarmament and demilitarisation of Gaza, which both Israel and the Board of Peace are determined should be prompt and completed before any reconstruction happens in Gaza."

In a separate statement, a Board of Peace official said the meeting was "in depth and very productive": "We agreed with the PM on a path forward. The Israelis are going to give this a chance. Now it's up to Hamas to show if it truly intends to comply."

The timing of the meeting, which also included Tony Blair and Nickolay Mladenov, who both sit on Trump's Board of Peace, was not auspicious. With Netanyahu struggling in the polls ahead of national elections later this year, Gaza – and Netanyahu's role in events leading up to Hamas's surprise attack on Israeli border communities on 7 October 2023 – remains a highly charged issue where Netanyahu is seen as vulnerable.

According to the Haaretz newspaper, the meeting ended with the US agreeing that Israel could continue striking Gaza, apparently contradicting a statement from Trump earlier yesterday that Israel "should not be striking in Gaza".

While Hamas says it has agreed to the roadmap, which includes disarmament, the group is urging mediators and the Board of Peace to compel Israel to sign on. Officials from the mediating countries Egypt, Qatar and Turkey were also present.

Israel, which under the roadmap must gradually withdraw from Gaza, insists Hamas must fully disarm before any Israeli withdrawal, a sequence representing a long-term impasse. Instead, Israeli troops continue to occupy about 60% of the strip and Netanyahu has previously threatened to take over more.

A day earlier, Kushner met Hamas's political chief, Khalil al-Hayya, for talks about disarmament, according to a regional official and a Hamas official who both spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to talk to reporters. The Hamas official said it was committed and waiting for mediators to start the 14-day negotiation period to work out a timetable for implementation. That period requires all parties' approval of the roadmap to begin.

At stake are the lives of about 2 million people in Gaza and reconstruction of the crowded enclave now largely controlled by Israeli forces, more than 10 months since the ceasefire ended major military operations.

Israel has killed more than 1,200 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded more than 4,100 since agreeing to the ceasefire on 10 October 2025, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Additional reporting **Agence France-Presse, Reuters and AP**

US will bomb Oman 'if it gets in the way' of deal with Iran, says Trump

Continued *from page 1*

That two-month window for a negotiated settlement closed yesterday without a breakthrough. But Trump also claimed during yesterday's interview that he was "not in a hurry" to reach a deal.

He has repeatedly claimed that the war would end "soon", and has talked up the prospect of a lasting peace deal in recent months without such a breakthrough materialising.

In the same interview, Trump said Iran should "put up the white flag of surrender", but signalled he was not about to impose a fresh deadline on Tehran. "I have no time schedule. I'm not in a hurry," he said.

Trump signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran at the Palace of Versailles on 17 June, on the sidelines of the G7 summit.

The memorandum paused hostilities and set a maximum 60-day window – extendable only by mutual consent – for the two sides to reach a comprehensive deal covering sanctions relief, Iran's nuclear program and other disputes.

Trump also dismissed concerns that Washington's own arsenal had been depleted by nearly six months of fighting, telling Fox News that what the US had expended against Iran so far was "peanuts".

He suggested that many of the US's more advanced munitions, including air defence systems, had already been "given away" to Ukraine under his predecessor, Joe Biden – a claim that echoes warnings from defence analysts earlier in the war that US and allied stockpiles were being drawn down faster than they could be replenished.

The remarks came after Trump used his Truth Social platform to restate his negotiating red line. "The number one Goal is, and always will be, that Iran cannot have, in any way, shape, or form, a Nuclear Weapon," he wrote.

The strait of Hormuz – a crucial chokepoint for global trade, through which about a fifth of the world's seaborne oil supplies typically passes – has been all but closed since the US and Israel launched their war on Iran in February.

Iran is to the north of the strait. Oman is to the south. The two countries have been in talks over control of the waterway.

In a casual aside at a cabinet meeting in May, Trump threatened to "blow up" Oman if it failed to "behave".

During a speech on Friday Trump also threatened to declare the strait of Hormuz "a territory of the United States".

In addition to Oman's decades-long military and economic ties with the US, the Gulf nation of 5.3 million people has played a mediation role in the war and has itself come under attack from Tehran.

Iran's foreign ministry said yesterday that talks with Oman were "continuing in earnest", despite Trump's latest outburst.

The US president also confirmed for the first time that Washington had opened a direct backchannel to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which the US and Israel have targeted throughout the conflict.

"They're good poker players, but they're dying," he said of the IRGC leadership.

MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN

▲ *Donald Trump has said repeatedly that war with Iran would end 'soon'*

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Tyler's coffin is carried out of Swansea Minster after the funeral service; right, a woman watches the service on a big screen outside the church

PHOTOGRAPHS: MATTHEW HORWOOD/ GETTY IMAGES; ALASTAIR GRANT/AP

Hundreds of people line the streets as the Total Eclipse singer's hearse, with a white coffin covered in bouquets of white roses, arrives at the church

PHOTOGRAPH: HANNAH MCKAY/ REUTERS

'She never forgot her roots' Fans gather in Swansea to say farewell to Bonnie Tyler

Bethan McKernan
Wales correspondent

Bonnie Tyler's songs have echoed through her home town of Swansea in recent days in memory of the late singer, but yesterday the church bells stopped and wellwishers lining the streets fell silent as her coffin arrived for a celebration-of-life service.

As the white coffin, covered in bouquets of white roses, was carried into the church, shouts of "God bless you, Bonnie" and "Bye, Bonnie" punctured the air. Those gathered to pay their respects burst into applause. Tyler's songs If I Sing You a Love Song and It's a Heartache played before the private service began, which mourners outside watched on a screen in nearby St David's Square.

The Total Eclipse of the Heart star, whose real name was Gaynor Hopkins, split her time between Mumbles, in a house overlooking Swansea Bay, and the Algarve. She died aged 75 in July in hospital in Portugal after a period of ill health and is survived by her husband of 53 years, Robert Sullivan.

The couple were well known in the area, and many people the Guardian spoke to yesterday had met Tyler or knew her personally. Mourners began arriving from 7.30am for the noon service, bringing camping chairs and supplies, with some travelling from as far away as Germany and Austria.

Allyson Thomas, 58, whose partner played in a band with Tyler's brother, said: "We went to a few parties at the Mumbles house. They were wonderful. There was karaoke, performances. As we got in the taxi home, Bonnie handed us some champagne for the journey home. She was really special, she was so down to earth and a star at the same time."

Tyler grew up as one of six children in a musical family in a council house in Skewen, a village north-east of Swansea. A "painfully shy" teenager, she started gaining confidence at 17 after singing and coming second in a local rugby club talent competition. "After that, she never looked back," Roger Bell, the talent scout who discovered her, said in his tribute during yesterday's service.

Sandra Bartlett, 63, from nearby Port Talbot, said she had known Sullivan during his days as a nightclub manager, and her ex-husband had been friendly with the couple. "We went out to the first house she had in Portugal and they were great hosts," she said.

"Gaynor was lovely, always ready for a chat or a gossip. She went from strength to strength as she got older, she was still performing a lot. I think it says a lot about her that she came home to Skewen. It's not like she was from a big place like London or something. Now Bobby's bought her home for the last time."

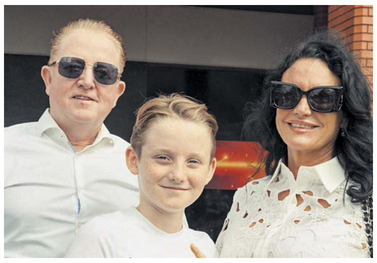
The Cash family said they had met Tyler a few times in Swansea's shopping centre and Debenhams, when the singer was out with her mother. "She never forgot where she came from and she was proud of where she's from," said Bill, 50, who came to pay his respects with wife, Jane, 49, and son, Billy, 11.

Among several events in and around Swansea to mark Tyler's passing, fans were invited to watch the procession as the singer's coffin travelled to her home in Mumbles on Saturday and again after the service at Swansea Minster as the hearse made its journey to Skewen. "I wouldn't come out for the king. Half the people here wouldn't," one onlooker in Skewen said.

The singer achieved international fame in 1983 when Total Eclipse of the Heart shot to the top of the charts in the UK and the US. Recognisable for her husky voice, Tyler's other hits include Holding Out for a Hero and If You Were a Woman (and I Was a Man).

She represented the UK in the 2013 Eurovision song contest and was still touring internationally and releasing records when she died.

"I class myself as a working-class girl, and I've never stopped working," Tyler said in 2013. "I do an awful lot [of performances] because I feel other people would love to be offered what I'm offered."



Among those outside the church were the Cash family; top right, Allyson Thomas, left, with friends; and right, Sandra Bartlett

> ***'She was special – so down to earth but a star at the same time'***
>
> **Allyson Thomas**
> *Mourner*

PM urged to act over prison's ads for zero-hours custody officers

Rajeev Syal
Home affairs editor

Andy Burnham is under pressure to intervene in a privately run prison after a trade union claimed that custody officers were being recruited on zero-hours contracts for the first time across the England and Wales prison estate.

Managers at HMP Millsike, a category C prison for 1,500 inmates near York operated by the outsourcing company Mitie, have signed off online adverts for £25-an-hour inmate-escorting roles "on a flexible, task-based basis".

The £400m prison has about 350 empty cells because of a shortfall of staff, prison sources have confirmed.

The prison officers' union, the POA, has called on the prime minister to intervene in keeping with the government's pledge to curb zero-hours contracts that undermine workers' rights, security and stability.

The deputy general secretary of the POA, Mick Pimblett, said: "At a time when the government is releasing prisoners because of a chronic lack of cell space, Mitie is unable to fulfil its contractual obligations because they cannot recruit enough officers to safely staff the jail. Now they are trying to introduce zero-hours contracts by another name."

HMP Millsike, a training prison with up-to-date facilities, started taking prisoners in March 2025. A recent report expressed "serious concerns" over the jail, where violence levels were so high that members of the Independent Monitoring Boards watchdog said they felt safe only if they walked around in pairs.

Adverts placed by Sangfroid Group on behalf of Mitie say the new prison custody officers at Millsike will escort prisoners between prisons, courts and medical appointments – tasks currently performed by full-time prison officers.

The role is to support "prisoner escort duties in locations near to the prison" and successful applicants will be given seven weeks of training, the advert says.

State-run prisons already recruit operation support-grade officers who staff gates and let visitors into reception. However, they are not supposed to escort, guard, handcuff or interact with prisoners, unlike the prison custody officers referred to in the advert.

A Mitie spokesperson said: "HMP Millsike continues to operate in line with the ramp-up plans agreed with the Ministry of Justice, with staffing and recruitment aligned to the prison's phased population buildup."

Sangfroid Group and the MoJ were approached for comment.

Mrs Brown's Boys festive specials cancelled as star needs surgery

PA Media

Brendan O'Carroll has announced the Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas and New Year television specials have been cancelled as he faces an "unexpected medical issue".

The creator and star of the show, 70, said the recordings would not be going ahead as he required "immediate surgery".

He said in a statement: "Following a CT scan, it was found that I had two fractures in my mandible (jaw) which requires immediate surgery and a few months recovery."

He also said he would have to postpone his Mrs Brown's Boys D'Panto? shows in Dublin and Killarney, which were scheduled for later this year.

"This decision has not been taken lightly and has been made on medical advice from my consultant," he said.

"To say I am heartbroken is an absolute understatement. I would like to sincerely apologise to all our fans who were looking forward to seeing the shows and for any disappointment caused."

The comedian and actor said he and MCD Productions were working to reschedule the shows for next year. O'Carroll wrote that he had also been speaking with the BBC about getting his TV series "back on the screen" in 2027. He thanked MCD and the BBC for their "support and understanding at this difficult time".

A statement from a BBC spokesperson said: "We wish Brendan a full and speedy recovery and are working with him on plans for Mrs Brown's Boys in 2027."

O'Carroll is best known for playing the matriarch, Agnes Brown, in the hit BBC comedy series.

▲ *Brendan O'Carroll, who plays Agnes Brown in the BBC series, said he needed surgery on a fractured jaw*

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People with intellectual disabilities 'die up to 24 years earlier'

Tobi Thomas
Health and inequalities correspondent

People living with severe intellectual disabilities are, on average, dying 24 years younger than members of the general population, a study has found, with 40% of such deaths being avoidable.

The study also found that within this group people from minority ethnic backgrounds were dying 14 years younger than their white counterparts.

Researchers from King's College London analysed data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the LeDeR programme of 1,301 adults with severe or profound intellectual disability who died in England between 2021 and 2023.

They then compared this with 2,626 adults with a mild or moderate intellectual disability, and 536,311 adults from the general population, who died in 2022.

People with severe or profound intellectual disability died at an average age of 58, compared with 65 for those with a mild or moderate intellectual disability and 82 for the general population. Two in five of the deaths were avoidable.

Avoidable deaths were defined as deaths occurring before the age of 75 due to preventable or treatable causes. Pneumonia and epilepsy were found to be the leading avoidable causes, notably higher than in the other two groups, followed by cerebrovascular disease.

Jon Sparkes, the chief executive of the learning disability charity Mencap, said the research was "shocking" but "sadly unsurprising".

"Much more must be done to ensure people with the most complex needs can access care. Organisational failings were identified in more than 40% of deaths reviewed last year, showing the way the NHS just isn't designed to work for people with a learning disability," Sparkes said.

He added: "This research shows why it is so vital that the government and NHS consider and meet the needs of people with a learning disability, whether in the new neighbourhood health schemes, through work on moving the NHS to be more digital, or preventing poor health. Only by doing this will we address and end the deep-rooted health care inequalities that are cutting lives short."

The analysis also found stark ethnic disparities. Within the group of people living with severe or profound intellectual disabilities, those from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds were likely to die 14 years younger than their white counterparts.

According to the researchers, this disparity may highlight additional challenges in accessing healthcare encountered by people from ethnic minorities, and also reflects how compounding inequalities exacerbated the already poorer health outcomes faced by people with disabilities.

Dr Michael Kwan Leung Yu, the first author of the study and a postdoctoral research associate at KCL, said: "LeDeR provides a unique national lens that no single trust or region can offer. Its scale allows us, for the first time, to examine avoidable deaths among adults with severe or profound intellectual disabilities through a population-based analysis and explore this in greater detail."

He added: "The findings point to a need for targeted interventions, including annual health checks, vaccination programmes, and timely management of conditions such as pneumonia and epilepsy, reaching adults with severe or profound intellectual disability consistently, with particular attention to those from ethnic minority backgrounds."

Dr Rory Sheehan, the co-first author of the study, said: "Pneumonia and epilepsy are largely treatable, so seeing them as leading causes of avoidable death in this group points to a gap between the care people could receive and the care they are getting. Closing that gap means making sure basic interventions, health checks, vaccination, timely treatment, reliably reach adults with severe or profound intellectual disability."

58
Average age at which people with severe intellectual disabilities died, against 82 for the general population

40%
Proportion of these deaths that were avoidable, according to analysis by King's College London researchers

Tupac Shakur shot dead in act of gang revenge, US jury hears as trial begins

Dani Anguiano

The rapper Tupac Shakur was shot dead in 1996 in an act of gang revenge ordered by a mobster, US jurors heard yesterday, as one of the country's most anticipated trials got under way, 30 years after the murder.

Duane "Keffe D" Davis, a former gang leader, is on trial in Las Vegas for murder for his alleged role in the shooting of Shakur, who died after a drive-by shooting.

Prosecutors allege Davis was the "on-the-ground, onsite commander of the effort to kill Tupac".

Davis has pleaded not guilty, though he acknowledged a role in the shooting in a 2019 memoir that authorities have said is crucial to the case against the 63-year-old. He is the only witness.

Last week, a jury of six men and 10 women was selected in the trial, which is expected to last about a month.

Davis entered the courtroom in a blue suit and tie and scanned the gallery to see who was there before sitting next to his lawyer, Michael Sanft. Members of Shakur's family, including his stepbrother Maurice "Mopreme" Shakur, sat quietly in the front row of the courtroom behind prosecutors.

Binu Palal, the chief deputy district attorney, showed jurors a video of Shakur's entourage attacking Davis's nephew Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson. "Let's be clear, Duane Davis did not pull the trigger. But he did plan the shooting in retaliation of the beating of his nephew," Palal said. "Remarkably, you will learn that from Duane Davis himself."

Palal showed multiple video clips and played audio of Davis describing his alleged role in the incident and anger toward Shakur for the attack on his nephew.

The defence lawyer, Michael Sanft, said that after 30 years investigators still had very little evidence to prove their case.

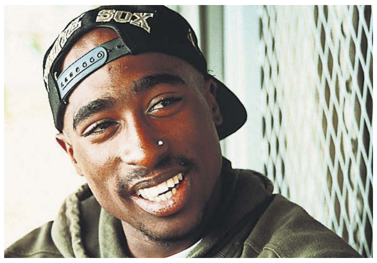
"At the end of the day you have to ask yourself, is what they are saying truth or fiction?" Sanft told the jury.

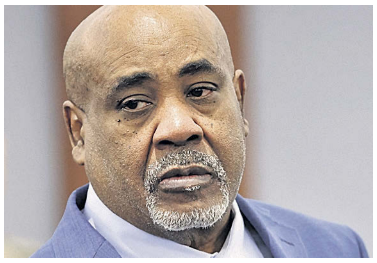
Sanft said that while Davis had spoken about the killing to different law enforcement agencies over the years, including the FBI, they did not follow up because they did not believe what he said was credible.

The trial is a significant development in the case, which was unsolved for decades.

On 7 September 1996, the rapper was attacked just off the Las Vegas strip as he headed to a party with the Death Row Records founder, Marion "Suge" Knight. While travelling in the vehicle, a Cadillac pulled up next to Shakur's and fired eight shots. Shakur was hospitalised for his injuries and died days later.

Shakur's killing prompted countless conspiracy theories as well as books and documentaries seeking to determine who was responsible for his death. But a fuller picture of what may have occurred that night has emerged in recent years as Davis, who was the last surviving passenger in the Cadillac, began speaking publicly.





▲ *The rapper Tupac Shakur, top, was killed in 1996. Duane Davis, above, a former gang leader, appears in court in Las Vegas yesterday, on trial for murder for his alleged role in the drive-by shooting*

Earlier in the evening Shakur had attended a world heavyweight title boxing match between Mike Tyson and Bruce Seldon at the MGM Grand Hotel, and afterwards was involved in a physical confrontation with Davis's nephew and several others.

Davis sought retribution for Anderson and allegedly obtained a gun with the intent to "hunt down" Shakur and confront Knight. The incident unfolded quickly, Davis wrote.

"No words were exchanged, the time for talking had passed, the shit was on! Tupac made an erratic move and began to reach down beneath his seat. It was the first and only time in my life that I could relate to the police command to 'keep your hands where I can see them'. Instead, Pac pulled out a strap, and that's when the fireworks started. One of my guys from the back seat grabbed the Glock and started bustin' back," he wrote.

Prosecutors have said that Davis's book and public statements ultimately revived the investigation.

His lawyers sought to exclude the book from trial by arguing that he had exaggerated to "falsely place himself at the centre of it all for personal gain". A judge denied the request.

The trial continues.

Additional reporting **Associated Press and Reuters**

Music review

Rip-snorting country pivot is a rootin' tootin' hoot

Brandon Flowers
Thrasher
★★★★☆

Shaad D'Souza

Here are three immutable facts about Brandon Richard Flowers: he was born just outside Las Vegas, Nevada. He is 45 years old. And he never does anything by halves. When he and his band the Killers debuted in the early 2000s, as disaffected New York cool was on the rise, he was writing scream-along choruses sung in his upper register. When the Killers were searching for a sound even bigger than 2006's Sam's Town, they didn't think twice before recruiting Stuart Price to produce the spangly 2008 disco-rock record Day & Age.

That's how you get a record like Thrasher. Flowers' third solo album finds Vegas's chosen son decamping to Nashville for a full-throated exploration of country music – not subtle Americana, but rip-snorting, honky-tonking, Nudie suit-wearing country.

◀ *Brandon Flowers goes full cowboy in his third solo album, calling in the talents of the country music greats Bruce Bouton and Charlie McCoy*

In many ways, Thrasher is a stylistic follow-up to the Killers' maudlin 2021 Pressure Machine, which saw Flowers explore windswept balladry and tasteful story-songs. But that record was as forgettable as Thrasher is a hoot; Flowers wilts when he doesn't fully commit, but he doesn't make that mistake here. Thrasher features many of Nashville's most revered country musicians, including the pedal steel great Bruce Bouton, 85-year-old harmonica player Charlie McCoy, Gillian Welch's musical partner Dave Rawlings and the lauded Americana musician Margo Price.

This deep bench doesn't obscure Flowers' oddball tendencies. On rollicking opener Does It Ever Cross Your Mind?, he writes like a man who's done his 10,000 hours absorbing pop cliches. "I could've been born in Bangladesh / But I wasn't, I was born here / With just enough jellybeans in my basket / To ask you to go a-wishing on a star," he sings, injecting his nonsense with such moxie it's easy to believe that's something people say.

As on Pressure Machine, Flowers takes a couple of big swings, both misses. On Miss America, he writes from the perspective of a young woman in an abusive relationship. Although this is something of a pet topic for Flowers, he is not a particularly elegant writer; amid all the salacious euphemisms for abuse, he sings things such as: "Truth be told / Grown men have noticed me since I was 12 years old / It always made me feel like some kind of prize / I guess I saw my worth through their porno eyes."

But even that feels graceful in comparison with Angel. There's no way to sugarcoat it: Angel is a song about a talented black baseball player who starts dating a white girl. Angel and the girl have a daughter, before he abandons his wife and kid to become a drug smuggler. The song ends with Angel being pulled over by the cops and attempting to evade them on foot. It's impossible to comprehend how Flowers thought this song was a good idea. When Angel and his girlfriend have their baby, he sings: "Chocolate and vanilla swirls / There's gonna be a little girl". Flowers supposedly wrote more than 30 songs for the record, so there were at least 20 alternatives.

The place Flowers lands – "It don't matter how far you've come / Or how well you ran the race / You're gonna have to come face to face / With that thing you've always known to be true / That you buried inside of you" – could be a critique of American racial hegemony, or it could be flat-out racist, implying our fates are hardwired. I strongly suspect it's the former, but the ambiguity is an indictment in itself.

Flowers has always had occasional bouts of foot-in-mouth; this simply feels like a particularly bad one. A big part of Angel's failure is that it is one of the few genuinely dull songs on the album – plodding and dirgey, with an attempt at a pathos-drenched chorus that has little of the spark or fleet-footedness of the rest of the album. Although it lacks the attention-grabbing singles of 2015's The Desired Effect, Flowers' last solo record, Thrasher is a far stronger, more enjoyable album that could even win over fans who haven't tapped in since Mr Brightside. The westernwear suits him.

▼ *More frequent and extreme droughts could fuel more wildfires like the recent blaze in Stourbridge*
PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/GETTY

Emergency drought plans not published for 'security reasons'

Pippa Neill
Environment reporter

The UK government has been accused of a lack of transparency and of acting irresponsibly for refusing to publish the emergency drought plans that are produced by water companies.

Water firms are required to publish statutory drought plans every five years to detail the actions needed to ensure public water supply is maintained and the environment is protected during drought.

Water levels at five key reservoirs in England and Wales are now "exceptionally low" and three-quarters of England and the whole of Wales are in drought.

The 2027-32 drought plans under consultation detail different scenarios, with the most extreme actions ranging from standpipes in the street to rota cuts where water is limited to a few hours each day. Alongside these publicly available plans, water companies are required to produce separate emergency drought plans.

A water industry source said these plans were not published to avoid alarming the public. The government said the plans were not published for security reasons.

Alastair Chisholm, the water, policy, regulation and governance lead at the consultancy firm Arup, said in the "new normal" of the climate crisis causing droughts to become more frequent and extreme, there would probably be situations where "some quite difficult decisions need to be taken with some quite significant impositions on people's lifestyles".

He pointed to Day Zero in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2018, when millions of households faced drastic water shortages after the worst drought to hit the city in almost a century. "People do genuinely start to be scared that they're not going to be able to get water to drink, and that has got all manner of sort of social connotations which is going to need to be very carefully managed," he said.

Prof Liz Bentley, the chief executive of the Royal Meteorological Society, said it made sense not to publish these plans because drought could lead to widespread impacts on certain critical industries. For example, recent drought and extreme heat in Europe forced several nuclear power plants to shut down.

"If you start to see significant shortages of water that impact major industries then these are the kind of things you want to keep confidential because that could have widespread effects on the security of the country," Bentley said.

In some areas, the impact is already being felt. Sussex, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk have all seen housing and business development delayed due to water supply availability and ageing or inadequate water infrastructure. Water shortages are also affecting food security, with global food prices at a three-year high as heatwaves, drought and war push up the cost of crops.

With water increasingly becoming a scarce commodity and as demand increases due to the rapid growth of water-hungry industries such as datacentres, the trade body Water UK recently said it had asked the government to publish a drought hierarchy to set out which sectors would be prioritised in times of water shortages, but that ministers had yet to do so.

"Without this there will be a trade-off across society," said Jon Chappell, Water UK's deputy director.

Oliver Hayes, the head of big tech and campaigns at Global Action Plan, said that amid increasing concern that datacentres could be prioritised over other sectors for water, it was irresponsible for the government to keep its emergency drought plans from the public.

"People are deeply anxious about dwindling water supplies and want to know what the plan is. Will water-hungry AI datacentres be prioritised in a drought emergency? The secrecy only adds to a sense that controversial decisions like this may have already been made," he said.

The Green party leader, Zack Polanski, said it was "deeply worrying that emergency drought plans are being hidden from the public" and "people deserve to know what plans – if any – are in place to protect our water supply". Polanski said full nationalisation of water companies must be at the top of the government's agenda to "prevent catastrophic water shortages in the years ahead".

On Sunday it was reported that the industry regulator, Ofwat, was considering allowing water companies to raise bills during periods of drought.

Amy Fairman, the head of campaigns at River Action, criticised the government's overall lack of transparency. "My key concern is around the lack of a holistic plan to deal with water shortages going forward. There is no more precious resource than water, and yet there isn't a national water security plan in place," she said.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said emergency drought plans were in addition to publicly available statutory drought plans and would not be published for security reasons.

A Water UK spokesperson said: "Each water company publishes a drought plan, which is consulted on publicly and sets out the actions the company will take at each stage of a drought.

"Planning for a severe drought sits under a separate framework, and publication is a matter for government. We support calls from the House of Lords environment and climate change committee for the government to decide how water should be prioritised in a severe drought."

◀ *A maize field suffers in the heat at Bourgoin-Jallieu, near Lyon; below, sweltering temperatures in Berlin* PHOTOGRAPH: MOURAD ALLILI/SHUTTERSTOCK

‘Catastrophic’ harvests

European farmers warn of unprecedented crisis

Jon Henley *Paris*
Angela Giuffrida *Rome*
Stephen Burgen *Barcelona*

Successive intense heatwaves and an increasingly severe, continent-wide drought have left many of Europe’s farmers in an “unprecedented” crisis, with vegetable and grain growers in particular warning of “catastrophic” harvests.

French vegetable production is down by “a very significant extent” compared with previous years, French growers have said, with shortfalls put at 25% for courgettes, 35% for lettuces, 40% for peas, 60% for broccoli and 50% to 100% for artichokes.

“The vegetable sector is facing a historic crisis,” said Prince de Bretagne, which groups together more than 1,300 vegetable producers in Brittany, calling for “urgent action” to address a “dramatic” fall in yields and in the quality of many crops.

Accelerated, human-caused global heating and a supersized El Niño have scorched fields across Europe this summer, with plant development prevented by temperatures routinely exceeding 30C (86F) and often 35C, almost no rainfall, and hot winds.

“Usually one region fares better, which helps compensate,” Eric Legras, of the 4,400-member French canned and frozen vegetable producers’ association, told Le Monde.

“This year, all our main production areas have been hit, and at the same time,” said Legras.

Cereal production has been equally hard hit, with the agriculture ministry estimating the maize harvest in France – Europe’s largest grains producer – will be down by by 35% on 2025 levels at about 9m tonnes, a quantity last seen in 1980.

Part of the fall is due to farmers’ switching to other crops, such as sunflowers, the ministry said, but it also reflects the impact of this summer’s vicious heatwaves, which have battered the crucial crop during critical stages of its growth cycle.

That is likely to cause major problems for livestock farmers. With dairy cows typically starting to suffer from heat stress above 25C, many producers have already reported milk yields down by 10%-15%. Most are now also concerned about winter feed.

Agreste, the agriculture ministry’s statistics service, said last week that production of hay for winter cattle forage was running about 30% lower than the 1989-2018 average, a shortfall that “is worsening and is now affecting a growing numbers of regions”.

Egg production, too, has been hit by a catastrophic mortality rate in poultry houses, particularly during the June heatwave. According to France’s national egg promotion board, output is about 1m eggs a day lower than the norm.

In Italy, about 60% of farmland across the country is now affected by drought ranging from mild to severe, according to data published earlier this month by Coldiretti, the country’s largest farmers’ organisation.

Crop yields, especially for corn, rice and soybeans as well as vegetables and fruit, have been badly hit, and milk production has fallen by 20%. The overall cost to the sector, including damage caused by wildfires and heavy storms, is put at more than €3bn (£2.6bn).

The drought is particularly acute in the Po valley, a huge geographical area straddling four northern regions, the backbone of Italian agriculture and home to about 80% of Italian rice production, owing to severe depletion of the country’s longest river.

Italy is Europe’s largest rice producer, with about 235,000 hectares planted in 2025. This year, however, the severe drought has forced growers to adopt an unprecedented response to save the season, irrigating crops only on alternate weeks.

In Spain, cereal harvests are 35% below the previous year in Castilla y León, 49% in the Madrid region and 24% in Andalucía. Sheep and goat’s milk production is also down 6.5% and 10.8% respectively, authorities have said.

After a disastrous harvest in drought-stricken 2024, olive oil production increased significantly last year and the wet winter and spring were good news for a crop not harvested until late autumn. Growers say it is too early to say how this year will look.

However, Spain’s national wine federation has predicted a 20% fall in production for 2026, and the head of the cava producers’ association, José Luis Benítez, warned that successive heatwaves will reduce crops as grapes are smaller for lack of moisture.

Governments have pledged costly aid packages to help the sector. The French prime minister, Sébastien Lecornu, has promised €145m in immediate aid, along with “structural support and investment measures” in the 2027 budget.

60%

Decline in broccoli production in France this year, with cereal crops, peas and artichokes also hit hard

▲ *Lake Santa Croce, Italy. The country is Europe’s largest rice producer but farmers have struggled to irrigate crops* PHOTOGRAPH: SIMONE PADOVANI/GETTY IMAGES

▲ *Older people are at risk of heat stress at lower temperatures than younger adults* PHOTOGRAPH: VALENTINA STEFANELLI/LAPRESSE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Extreme heat

Heatwaves pose serious risks for over 60s – study

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

People aged 60 and over face dangers to their health from exposure to heat at much lower temperatures than previously thought, research has found.

Older adults will bear the brunt of increasingly frequent sustained spells of extreme heat globally as the world continues to warm up, according to a study in the Lancet Public Health.

Heatwaves will leave huge and growing numbers of people worldwide of all ages suffering from uncompensable heat stress (UHS) – where the body loses the ability to cool itself – and thus at risk of serious damage to their health, including death.

“Our results suggest accounting for age stratified vulnerability, intolerable heat will be experienced at much larger scales and for longer durations, affecting far more people than previously thought,” according to the study, which was led by health academics from Stanford University in California.

Older adults are known to be more in danger because of the effects of very high temperatures. They sweat less, their hearts work harder in the heat and their blood vessels do not widen as much as those of younger people, limiting their capacity to stay cool.

However, previous studies did not properly set out the different risks faced by younger people aged 15-39, middle-aged adults (40-59) and older adults (aged 60 or over). That is because they applied thresholds at which people cannot maintain their heat balance – which were accurate for younger people – to all age groups, thus overlooking older people’s greater risk of, for example, heart attacks.

A combination of rising global temperatures and the projected doubling in the world’s population of those aged 60 and over to 2.1bn by 2050 will cause more people that age to suffer heat-related health problems, especially in low- and middle-income countries such as India and Pakistan.

The study says: “UHS will become increasingly prevalent with global warming across all age groups. Older adults are projected to face far more frequent and widespread UHS than young adults.”

The UK Health Security Agency said recently that it feared 2026’s high temperatures in the UK were likely to mean that the country records its highest ever number of heat-related deaths in a year. The four-day heatwave in May and eight-day heatwave in June together caused 2,877 excess deaths, almost double the 1,504 seen during the summer of 2025.

Dr Simon Williams, an expert in heat and health inequalities at Swansea University, said: “This is a very significant study, with findings suggesting that heatwaves and extreme heat exposure is going to be a growing threat to human health in the coming years. In particular, it shows that heatwaves have unequal health impacts, with older adults particularly vulnerable.”

He added that the study suggested older adults were “at risk of harmful and potentially fatal heat stress” at just 1.5C of warming above preindustrial levels, compared with 4C for younger adults.

Each additional degree of global heating “exposes roughly 1 million more people to at least 180 hours of UHS annually”, the study says. This burden falls disproportionately on older adults. If heating continues to escalate, parts of the tropics and subtropics could become uninhabitable, especially for older people, it said.

Dr Hilary Williams, the clinical vice-president of the Royal College of Physicians, said: “We know that heatwaves bring a surge in patients. Older people often arrive with dehydration, having collapsed, or with existing conditions like heart and kidney disease made worse by the heat. Managing multiple health conditions at once is hard enough but doing it when the body’s ability to regulate its own temperature is less efficient makes it harder still.”

One hospital doctor reported the temperature on the geriatric ward where they work reaching 36C during this summer’s extreme heat. “That is not a safe environment for patients or staff,” said Hilary Williams.

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Rising number of people seek ADHD diagnosis without getting treatment

Rachel Hall

▶ *A mother and son, Shauna and Mason, from The Great ADHD Myth? documentary, which argues that ADHD is a 'social construct'*

PHOTOGRAPH: MINNOW PRODUCTIONS

People are increasingly seeking to obtain an ADHD diagnosis without pursuing treatment, according to experts who called for more research to understand why.

Some people now see ADHD as "an identity, rather than a disorder", with the result that many obtain assessments from poor quality private providers, which lead them to "believe they have a condition needing treatment", said the psychiatrist Dr Marios Adamou, the founder of the UK Adult ADHD Network (UKAAN).

This has resulted in a growth in complaints against NHS doctors when they are forced to reject low quality assessments, he added.

Adamou had seen recent figures showing that 50% of child patients did not pursue treatment after diagnosis, and observed a similar trend among adult patients in his clinic.

Some seek low, non-therapeutic doses of medication instead. "A lot of people would benefit from having amphetamines. You feel better, you can focus better, you can do more. But there hasn't been a debate that this country should be cognitively augmented to increase productivity with stimulants," he said.

"Why do people feel they can identify with these conditions? They are manifestations of a societal problem."

Adamou was speaking before a new Channel 4 documentary airs tonight called The Great ADHD Myth? It is presented by the NHS psychiatrist Dr Max Pemberton, who concludes that ADHD is a "social construct" rather than a medical condition, and that schools should adapt to better support a wider range of children rather than medicating them into fitting into a restrictive norm.

Adamou said ADHD was both a social construct and a brain disorder. Brain differences are well established through research, and diagnostic criteria have undergone "a lot of scientific scrutiny and validation", he said. But he added that "the ADHD concept has been expanded so much it's risking becoming meaningless".

He said this phenomenon was fuelled by "challenges with the quality and the regulation of the [ADHD services] market".

"Most of the assessment in the UK is now provided by the private sector," he said. "I don't think there's any other medical condition where the private sector provides as much care … When you have private providers providing the majority of care in a market system with a diagnosis that is commoditised, and attracts stimulants, you may have issues."

Despite this, he stressed that there was thought to be underdiagnosis of ADHD. Poor quality diagnoses have created "a double stigma" for many people. "Not only do you have stigma because you have ADHD, but also there's stigma about whether you have real ADHD," he said.

Jessica Lister, a clinical director at the private provider Care ADHD, feared that the documentary's message could be harmful. "Dismissing ADHD as a social construct doesn't just trivialise an established clinical condition – it perpetuates the inequalities faced by people with ADHD across education, health, employment and the justice system."

▲ *The psychiatrist Max Pemberton, presenter of The Great ADHD Myth?*

She added: "The question here isn't whether ADHD is a real medical problem – it's whether systems respond early enough, consistently enough and fairly enough."

Mark Pattison, the chief executive of Care ADHD, said it was important to differentiate between private providers, adding that his organisation's clinical governance was as strong as the NHS ADHD and mental health services he had run for 15 years. "Profit should never come before clinical quality. But efficiency isn't the enemy of it either," he said.

He added: "Standards need to apply to everyone, not just us. Some NHS trusts have children waiting two, five, even 10 years for an assessment."

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Album releases linked to crashes by distracted drivers, researchers say

Nicola Davis
Science correspondent

The release of a new album by Taylor Swift might be a cause for celebration among her fans – but such events have also been linked by researchers to an increase in fatal car crashes.

The study is said to shed light on the impact of distracted driving. "You can't randomise people into using their phones, and drivers rarely volunteer what they were doing in the seconds before a crash," said Dr Vishal Patel, the first author of the study, based at Harvard Medical School.

"Album releases give you something closer to an experiment – a day when smartphone use jumps nationally for reasons that have nothing to do with road conditions, weather or who happens to be driving."

In the journal Jama Network Open, Patel and colleagues report how they focused on the release of 10 major albums between 2017 and 2022, selected for having the highest number of Spotify streams within a single day. These included Midnights by Taylor Swift; Scorpion by Drake; and Harry's House by Harry Styles.

Streaming volumes for the top 200 songs in the US were 43% higher on the date of major album releases compared with the days surrounding the releases, although such data does not reveal whether the music was being streamed in a car. "What it establishes is that these days are genuinely different in terms of national engagement with music," said Patel.

The researchers used data from a registry of fatal US motor vehicle crashes to look at the number of fatalities on the dates these albums were released, as well as for the 10 days either side. After taking into account the day of the week, as well as federal holidays and the time of year, the data showed a relative increase of 15.1% on the date of major album releases, compared with similar days either side.

"This is equivalent to approximately 182 fatalities in the US attributable to the release days of the 10 included albums," the team write.

Patel said the release of a new album could distract drivers because accessing music is a search task, not a single button-press.

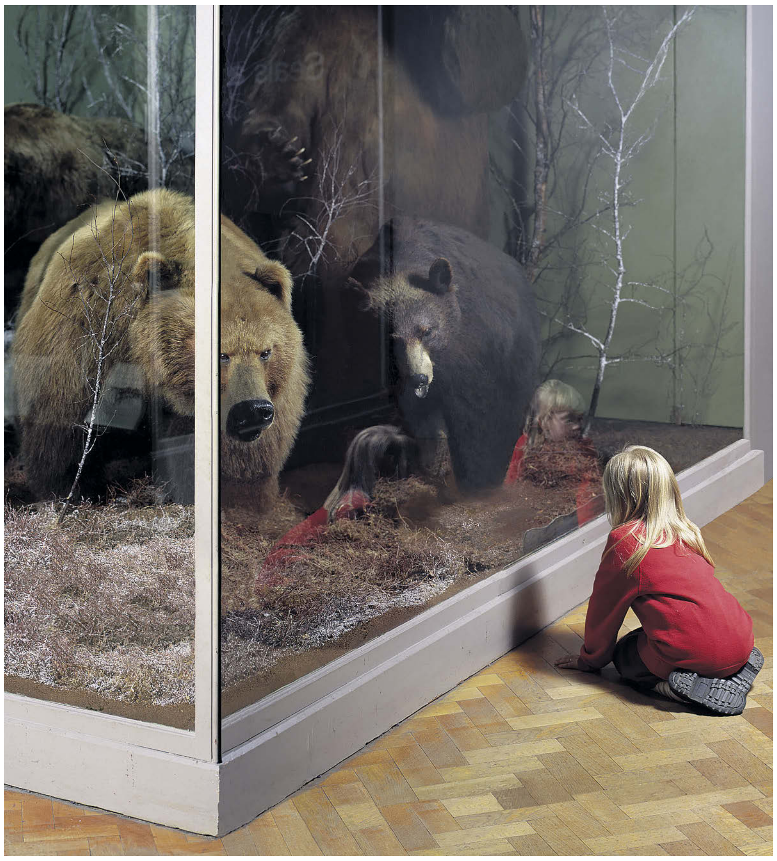
"You unlock the phone, open the app, find the release, read down a tracklist, tap the right song. That's several seconds of looking at a screen," he said, adding unfamiliar music demanded more attention, while research suggested listening to new, high-energy music measurably degrades driving performance.

The rise in traffic fatalities was greater among certain groups – such as younger drivers, male drivers, people who were driving alone, and people driving cars with a built-in infotainment platform.

The study does not directly probe whether smartphone use was involved in the fatalities. Patel suggested streaming platforms could adapt their notifications when promoting albums. "A line about setting your music up before you drive would cost them nothing," he said.

"Pick the album, hit play, put the phone down. If someone's in the passenger seat, hand it to them – the increase showed up almost entirely among drivers who were alone."

Many countries have implemented hands-free tech laws for drivers.



PHOTOGRAPH: WENDY MCMURDO

Paws and reflect Girl With Bears (1999), which is part of an exhibition, Wendy McMurdo: The Digital Mirror, at National Galleries Scotland: Portrait in Edinburgh.

My kind of morning view…

My favourite part changed daily. One morning it was the view from our balcony. The next, it was the little harbour we'd stumbled across while exploring ashore. Then came the kayak tour, weaving between coves we'd never have seen from shore, followed closely by the evening we sailed away at sunset. By the end of our cruise, we had more highlights than fridge magnets – and choosing a favourite was impossible.

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Muslim student denied entry to US despite valid visa

Chris Osuh
Community affairs correspondent

A British student who was detained and deported after flying to the US claims he was profiled for being Muslim.

Laith Alani said he felt as if he had been kidnapped when he was interrogated for nine hours and detained in a holding cell for another 14 hours by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at Orlando international airport.

His local MP, Anneliese Dodds, has raised the case with the British Foreign Office. Muslim and Arab organisations have raised concerns about the treatment of travellers to the US.

The 20-year-old from Oxford said he had booked a one-week, £2,500 visit to Florida's theme parks, with hopes to meet a relative based in California. Instead, his electronic devices and social media accounts were searched and he was interrogated about his relatives, neighbours, hobbies and travel history before being escorted on to a British Airways flight back to the UK.

US authorities said "inconsistencies were identified" in Alani's travel history "during inspection" and that he "withdrew his application for admission".

Laith Alani, 20, said he felt as if he had been kidnapped after being held by US customs for almost 24 hours
PHOTOGRAPH: SARAH LEE/THE GUARDIAN

Alani, however, said his removal from the US was put to him as a "forcefully settled outcome".

He had previously been refused a fast-track Esta visa waiver after disclosing his travel history to Iraq, where he has relatives, but had been granted a 10-year multi-entry B1/B2 tourist US visa instead, which allows for tourism and visiting relatives.

He said: "My prior travel history was scrutinised in detail, particularly a trip to Tunisia I took in July last year, a month after obtaining my visa. It was implied I needed permission for this travel and should have informed the embassy in advance, despite this being a last-minute trip with no plans in place prior to obtaining my visa."

The Guardian has seen correspondence to Alani, in response to a complaint, in which the CBP said an officer determined that Alani, who has a British passport, was inadmissible to the US because he was "unable to overcome the presumption he was an intending immigrant".

Alani, a law student at the University of West London, was taken aside by a CBP official for "secondary inspection" on arrival in the US on 3 July. After nearly 24 hours' detention, he was told he would be deported and was given an electronic signature pad to sign, he said. He was then handed a document bearing his signature, which said he had volunteered to withdraw his application to enter.

"I would never have signed it if I understood," Alani said. "I'm autistic. I'm vulnerable. I'm legally disabled. I have a heart disorder. [The official] doesn't care. He's just nonstop interviewing me, nitpicking every single thing you can imagine.

"I felt like I'd been kidnapped. I was threatened with handcuffs. He's profiled me because I'm Muslim. I count myself lucky I wasn't shot."

A spokesperson for the Muslim Council of Britain said: "It's now a regular occurrence for many British Muslim families to hear of travellers to US airports holding British citizenship being detained, interrogated for multiple hours and devices being confiscated and searched, often on spurious grounds."

The Foreign Office said it had provided Alani with consular help and it advised UK nationals to check the latest USA travel advice before booking.

CBP said staff "adhere to strict protocols", that Alani was "monitored throughout" and the length of his time in custody "was due to limited flight availability". A spokesperson said: "Accusations of CBP personnel racially profiling are false. All persons arriving at a US port of entry are subject to inspection by CBP officers."

> *'He's profiled me because I'm Muslim. I count myself lucky I wasn't shot'*
>
> **Laith Alani**
> *British student*

Labour MP has whip suspended over Covid loans to his businesses

Matty Edwards

A Labour MP has been suspended after being questioned about government Covid loans taken out by his businesses.

Bayo Alaba, the MP for Southend East and Rochford, has referred himself to the Labour party for investigation after the Times asked about a loan given to one of his businesses during the pandemic.

After the Times contacted Labour for comment, the party suspended the whip from Alaba and said it had launched an internal investigation.

According to the newspaper, Alaba appears to have taken out two bounceback loans during Covid, but questions remain about an attempt to wind up one of his companies in 2022 and whether they were eligible.

In a statement, he said: "Like many businesses and entrepreneurs, I accessed financial support during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I am wholeheartedly committed to ensuring that the liability is met in full. I've referred myself to the Labour party's investigations process on the matter and I'll cooperate fully."

A Labour spokesperson said Alaba had referred the matter to the party. "The Labour party expects the highest standards from our elected representatives and we have robust processes in place to ensure those high standards are upheld," they said.

Bayo Alaba referred himself to Labour for investigation after questions were raised about a bounceback loan

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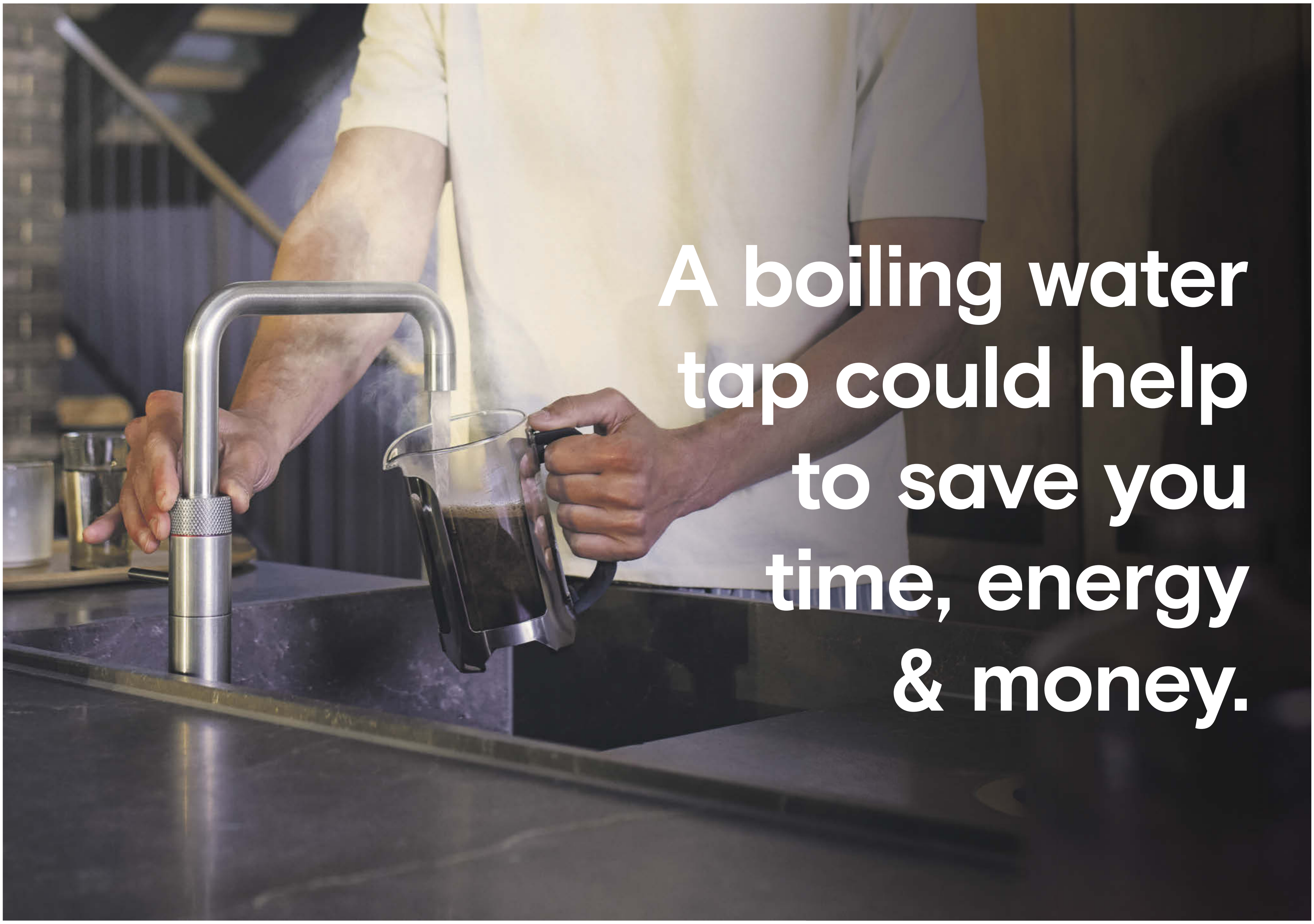
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Dance review

An uncanny journey into urban isolation

Taiwan Season: The Wall
Summerhall
★★★☆☆

Chris Wiegand

Taiwan's Seed Dance Company visited the fringe in 2024 with a rather literal yet haunting show about smartphone addiction, Lost Connection. This similarly coolly executed piece could share the same title as its predecessor but is more enigmatic.

It makes use of two box-like, occasionally illuminated apparatuses which are modified during the show to resemble apartments and various confines. The cast are repeatedly isolated from each other despite their close proximity on the thrust stage - one questing solo is delivered beneath another dancer on the roof, while one is in the room next door.

▼ *Kapitjuan Kadrangian and Wen-Jen Huang in The Wall, which riffs on confinement and anonymity*
PHOTOGRAPH: CHIH PENG LUCAS KAO

There is a busy urban and sometimes uncanny anonymity to these restless vignettes, accentuated by an electronic accompaniment, with the dancers - including the choreographer and artistic director, Wen-Jen Huang - sharing silvery highlights in their hair and wearing similar shirts and trousers in subdued shades.

These 45 minutes build in intensity, the set seeming at first cumbersome - and sometimes distracting from the dance when the structures are being reconfigured. The apparatus can be used to liberating effect, offering an assortment of micro-stages, but often suggests imprisonment. Dancers don't bounce off the walls but rather melt into them.

The show ends with a forlorn and otherworldly solo, performed inside two clingfilm-wrapped frames forming a tunnel. The impression is of how little divides us but how hard it can be to break through.

Until 31 August

Stage review

Racial tensions over a real-life pub closure

The Jolly Fisherman
Underbelly, George Square
★★★★☆

Mark Fisher

Two years ago, it was reported that a pub in Barking called The Jolly Fisherman had found a buyer after five years of dereliction. The prospective owner was a Muslim charity, which planned to turn a former business based on alcohol into a place of abstinence.

In one respect, a building that had been the focus of community life in this part of east London for 150 years would continue to be just that. In another respect, the community had changed.

To examine what that change might feel like, the playwright John Dinneen imagines two school friends, Alan (Alex Hill) and Amir (Jonny Khan). Alan's father is a fixture in The Jolly Fisherman - the kind of regular who has his own seat. Amir's parents, by contrast, are British-Pakistani immigrants who would never go into a pub.

The playwright avoids stereotypes. Yes, there are Brexity opinions among some of the drinkers, but they broadly welcome Amir (he tells his parents he is at a homework club). For his part, Alan takes enough of an interest in Amir's religion to join him for prayers. The tension comes when economic pressures expose the racism and Islamophobia lurking just below the surface - even for the seemingly accepting Alan.

In Layla Madanat's lively production, they bounce across a decade and more, from the boom days of beer-garden parties to the isolation of the pandemic and the far-right march and counter-protests of July 2024. Hill and Khan have the boyish exuberance of natural friends and we pity their falling out, but the play is subtle enough to understand the social importance of gathering places and the threat to community cohesion when they are lost.

Until 31 August

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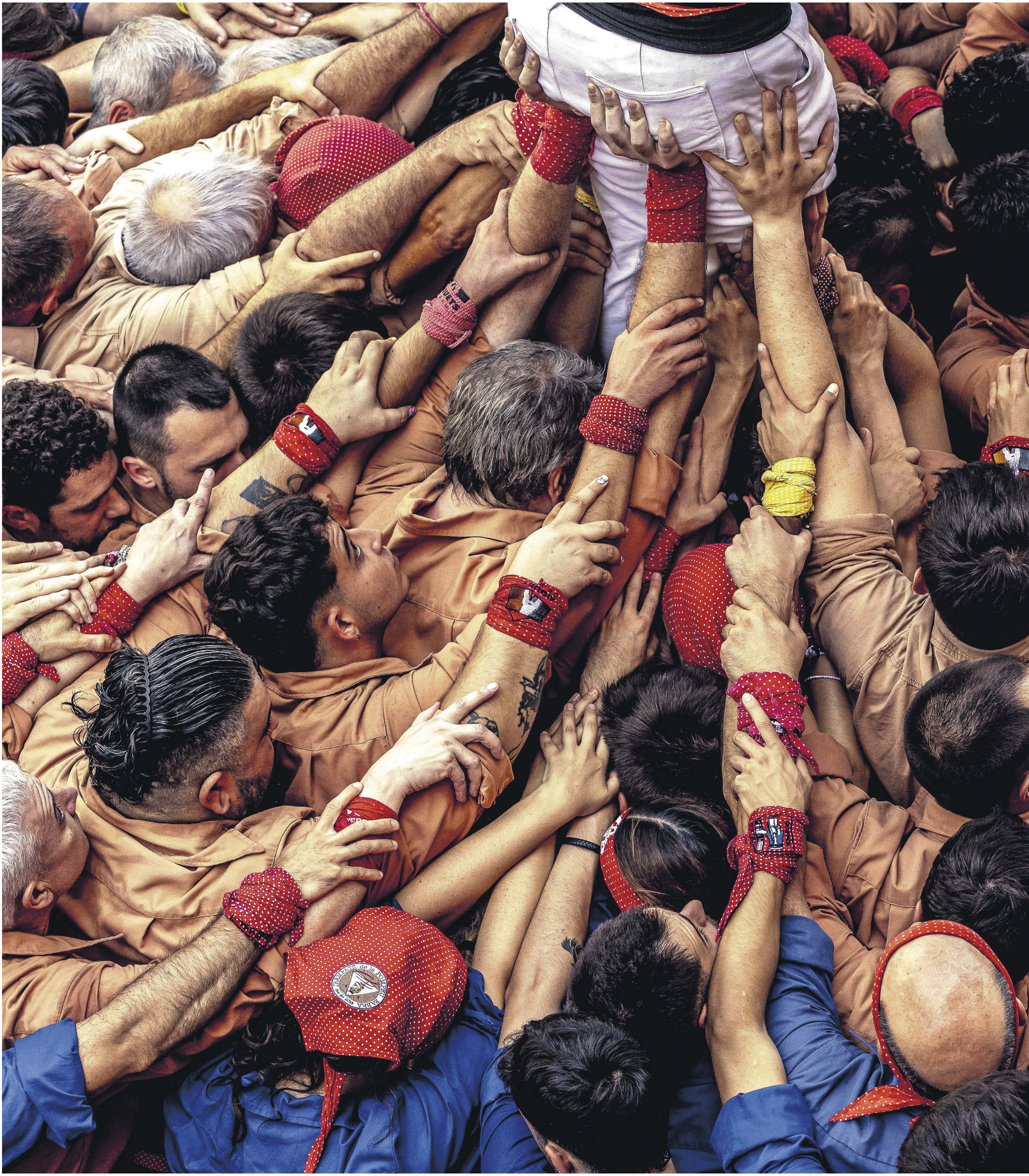
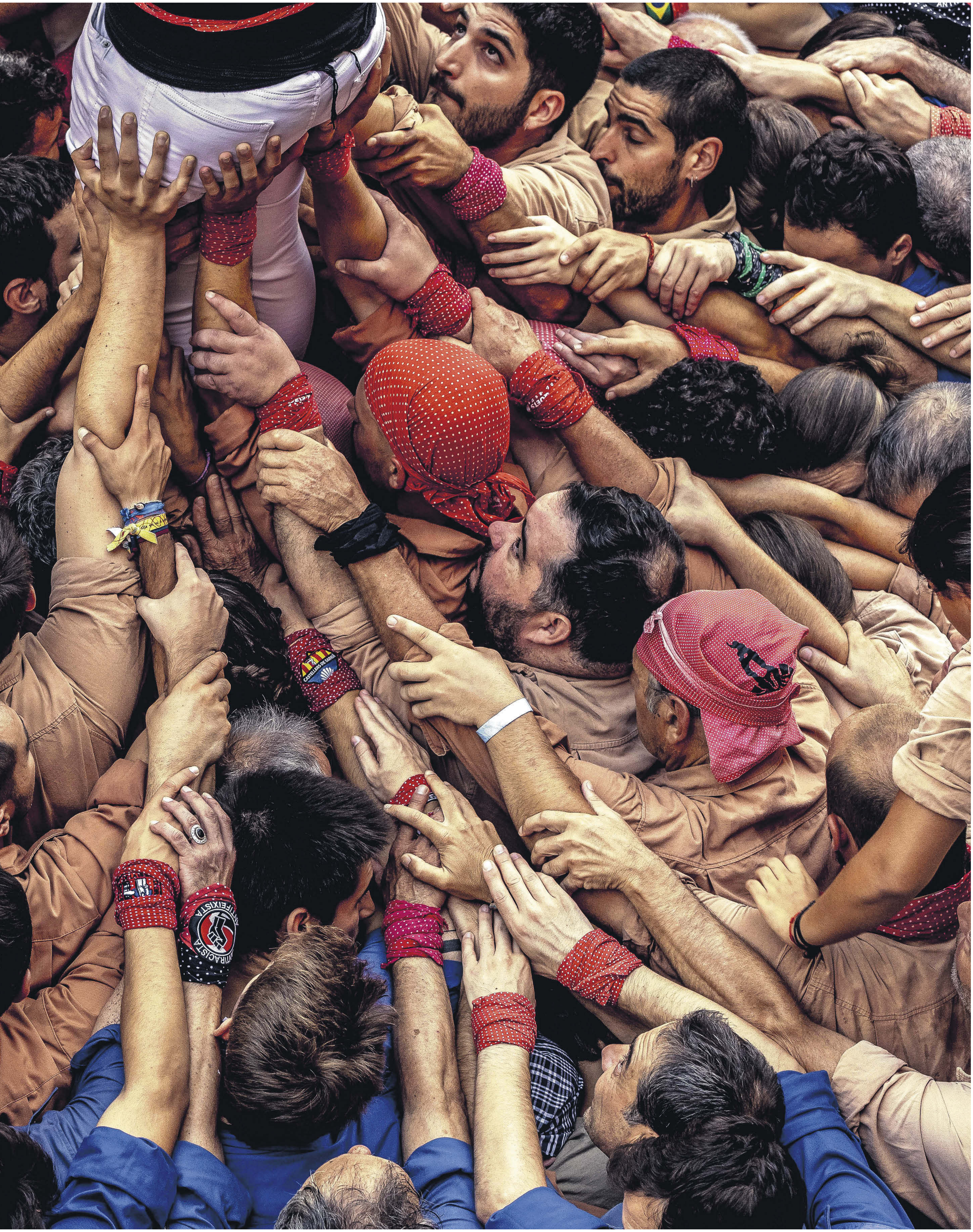
Eyewitness




CASTELLERS DE SARRIÀ
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Towering ambition
Members of the Castellers de la Vila de Gràcia gather to form the "*pinya*", the base that supports a human tower of six to 10 people, during the Festa Major de Gràcia, a street festival in the Gràcia district of Barcelona, Spain. This Catalan tradition dates back to the 18th century.

PHOTOGRAPH: MATTHIAS OESTERLE/ SHUTTERSTOCK

World

DRC Ebola outbreak is now country's deadliest and on track to be biggest in history

▲ *Top, at least 3,400 cases have been recorded in Ituri province, where the outbreak was first reported*
PHOTOGRAPH: DIEUDONNE DIROLE/AP

▲ *A boat is intercepted after the death of a passenger who had earlier disembarked*
PHOTOGRAPH: INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION/REUTERS

Nadeem Badshah
Rachel Savage

The Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now the deadliest in the country's history, with at least 2,325 people dead, according to government data, surpassing the toll from the 2018-20 outbreak.

The DRC's public health institute said confirmed cases had risen to 4,945, including 101 detected in the previous 24 hours.

The World Health Organization has said the outbreak was on track to surpass west Africa's 2014-16 Ebola outbreak as the biggest in history. The 2014-16 outbreak resulted in 28,616 cases and11,325 deaths across Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, according to WHO data.

On Friday, the UN said Ebola "is winning in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" and the epidemic was killing one person every 30 minutes.

Six of DRC's 26 provinces have been affected, mainly those along the north-eastern border. More than 3,400 of the cases have been recorded in Ituri province, where the outbreak was first reported.

This outbreak - the 17th in the DRC's history - is the fastest-growing in the known history of the virus. It took almost five months for the 2014-16 west Africa outbreak to reach 1,000 deaths, compared with more than 2,000 deaths in less than three months in this outbreak.

There are no approved vaccines or treatments yet for the rare Bundibugyo strain that is responsible for the current surge in cases. Nonetheless, 1,000 people in the DRC have recovered from the infection, with 730 still in healthcare or isolation facilities.

Clinical trials of two possible treatments began last month in Ituri. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO director general, said last week two vaccines developed specifically for Bundibugyo were being tested.

Thomas Parisch, a public health specialist recently deployed to the DRC with Médecins Sans Frontières, said: "Normally, as an outbreak progresses, the case fatality ratio should fall as contact tracing improves and patients are identified and treated earlier. Instead, we're still seeing many cases detected very late, when treatment is less likely to succeed, with many identified only after they die in the community."

Uganda has reported at least 20 cases, all in the capital, Kampala. The last case reported there was on 21 June and no community transmission has been recorded. The government declared the country Ebola-free on 28 July after the last Ebola patient, a Congolese national, was discharged on 16 July.

In May, the outbreak in the DRC and Uganda was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the WHO. However, it said sequencing showed the virus had started months earlier, in February.

Ebola is transmitted from wild animals and then spreads in the human population through direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other body fluids of infected people, including dead bodies, and with contaminated surfaces and materials.

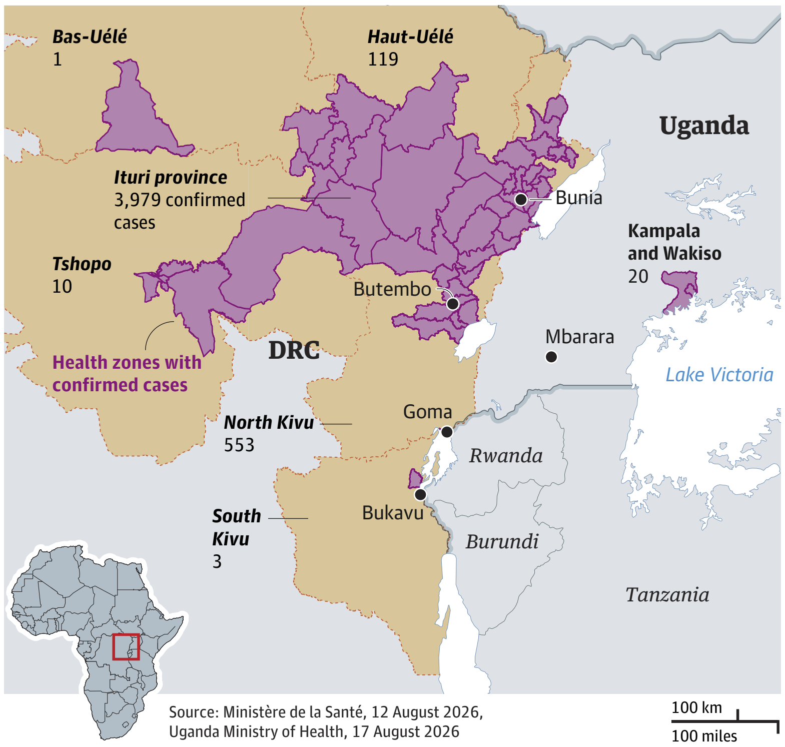
The response to this outbreak has been hampered by attacks on healthcare facilities, as well as strikes by some unpaid health workers. Poor health and road infrastructure have also complicated the picture.

More than 70% of people died in the community and not in health centres, said Mohamed Janabi, the WHO's regional Africa director.

"People prefer to be treated at home, thinking it is a case of poisoning or some other illness," Jean-Paul Malo Lotsima, a civil society official in the Djugu area of Ituri, told Agence France-Presse. "It's often at the last minute, when the family realises the situation is getting worse, that patients are taken to hospital. And sometimes, they die on the way."

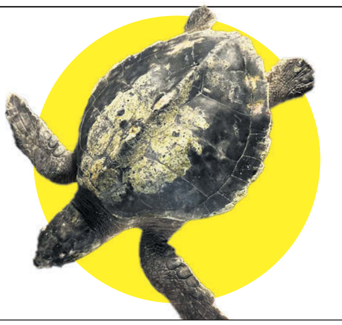
Flavier Ngurima, who lives in Nizi, one of the hotspots of the outbreak in Ituri, said his brother died before reaching the treatment centre. "We had called on a nurse from the family to treat him at home because the patient and the family members were afraid to go to the ETC [treatment centre]," he said. "They said that over there, a lot of people die."

Analysis Conflict and US aid cuts hindered fight against the virus



Source: Ministère de la Santé, 12 August 2026, Uganda Ministry of Health, 17 August 2026

Turtle on the mend
Washed up in Wales, recovering in Texas
Page 25



‘He doesn’t care’
Trump’s failure to govern set to cost him at midterms
Page 27

◀ *Healthcare facilities in affected areas have had to deal with attacks, public mistrust and workers’ strikes*
PHOTOGRAPH: MOSES SAWASAWA/AP

Denis Campbell
Rachel Savage

Health authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are losing their battle to contain the country’s deadliest Ebola outbreak.

The DRC’s health ministry declared an outbreak in Ituri province on 15 May, though sequencing shows it had begun in February. It has since spread to five other provinces and is on track to overtake the 2014-16 west Africa outbreak as the largest in history.

As of Sunday, 2,325 people had died and the number of confirmed cases stood at 4,945, according to DRC government data. “Ebola is winning in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” the UN humanitarian affairs chief, Tom Fletcher, said on Friday.

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a highly contagious and often fatal disease. Caused by different viruses mostly associated with fruit bats, the infection often results in viral haemorrhagic fever. More than 40 outbreaks have been documented since it first emerged in 1976. This is the 17th outbreak in the DRC.

Outbreaks result from zoonotic spillover – animal to human transmission. Infected humans, which can include dead bodies, then pass on the disease to others through body fluids such as vomit, blood and semen. Symptoms include fever, fatigue, muscle pain and headache followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash and internal and external bleeding. It has a 50% death rate.

There are four strains of Ebola that affect humans: Zaire, Sudan, Bundibugyo and Taï Forest. The latest outbreak involves the rare Bundibugyo virus. There have been two previous outbreaks involving this strain, in 2007 and 2012.

Why is this outbreak concerning?

There are many factors, including the lack of a vaccine or treatment for this strain of Ebola, conflict, mistrust towards health workers in the affected areas, misinformation, and global development aid cuts.

Clinical trials of two possible treatments for the Bundibugyo strain began last month, and two vaccines for it are being tested on people for the first time. Infection control usually involves bringing those affected into treatment centres to minimise transmission.

This effort is being stymied by attacks on healthcare facilities, often sparked by misinformation about safe burial practices, and fuelled by the impact of decades of unrest and outside interference on traumatised communities.

The outbreak is also centred on a mineral-rich region fought over by armed groups. The government still largely controls Ituri, but insecurity there had been worsening before the outbreak was declared. Almost a million people in the province have been displaced by conflict, according to the UN.

The outbreak has spread south to rebel-held areas of North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, where the Rwanda-backed M23 group controls large swathes of the region.

Humanitarian funding for DRC declined sharply in 2025, largely because the Trump administration froze foreign aid assistance to programmes funded through the state department, weakening local health systems and surveillance networks. Health workers at a treatment centre in Ituri went on strike recently, leading to its temporary closure, saying they had not been paid for three months.

Why was the outbreak not detected sooner – and why does that matter?

The earliest-known suspected victim, a 59-year-old man, developed symptoms on 24 April and died three days later. Health authorities were only alerted to the outbreak through social media on 5 May. Fifty people had already died by then, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

The World Health Organization says sequencing now shows the outbreak began in February.

Any delay in responding to an Ebola outbreak “can have catastrophic consequences”, said Dr Anne Cori, of Imperial College London. Undetected outbreaks “can make standard control measures, such as contact tracing, considerably more difficult to implement effectively, especially in a setting which already faces other challenges”.

How big could this outbreak get?

A lot bigger, potentially. It is on track to surpass the previous largest Ebola outbreak, when more than 28,600 people were infected and 11,325 died in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone between 2014 and 2016, according to WHO data. It is also the fastest-growing outbreak in the known history of Ebola. It took almost five months for the west Africa outbreak to reach 1,000 deaths, compared with more than 2,000 deaths in less than three months in this outbreak.

The head of the WHO’s emergency response division, Abdirahman Mahamud, said recently that if the response were implemented at the same time across the five transmission zones, a turnaround in three months might be expected. But even with that response, he said the outbreak would not peak for six months under a “moderate” scenario and it could last as long as 12 months.

Russian bank official fired for daring to criticise wartime economy

Pjotr Sauer

The chief economist of Russia’s second largest bank has been sacked after a series of critical comments about the state of the economy, including warnings that Moscow would not win a prolonged economic war with Ukraine.

Andrei Klepach, who had held the role at the state-controlled development bank VEB since 2014, was fired days after Russian media reported on a scathing speech he had delivered to fellow economists in May.

In the remarks, first reported by the Moscow Times, Klepach said Russia was “falling behind” China and the US economically, and “in some respects, Ukraine”.

Klepach said pressures on Russia’s economy as a result of the war would inevitably lead to a “social crisis” that would erupt “when no one particularly expects it”.

He also said expectations of an imminent Ukrainian economic collapse were misplaced and that a prolonged standoff with Ukraine would not lead to Russia’s victory.

“We will not win this competition in a war of attrition with Ukraine,” Klepach said. “We have an illusion that everything will collapse there. It hasn’t collapsed, and it won’t. Our costs are growing.”

The comments were a rare acknowledgment from a senior Russian economist of the country’s mounting economic struggles.

They directly contradicted Vladimir Putin’s claims that Moscow was successfully weathering the pressures of the war and that Ukraine’s economic exhaustion was only a matter of time.

VEB did not offer a reason for Klepach’s sacking. An acquaintance of Klepach told the business news outlet Vedomosti that his departure from the bank was “connected to his personal, harsh assessments of the country’s economic and political development, which cannot possibly align with the corporation’s position”.

The independent Russian outlet the Bell reported, citing sources, that Klepach had been fired on orders from the Kremlin and that his dismissal was directly linked to his speech in May.

Klepach’s dismissal highlights the Kremlin’s growing insistence on loyalty within Russia’s upper ranks, amid reports that Putin has increasingly surrounded himself with officials reluctant to challenge his views.

Alexandra Prokopenko, a former adviser to the Russian central bank and a fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, described Klepach as a respected economist who was unafraid to voice views that diverged from the official line.

“Klepach’s dismissal – he is one of Russia’s best macroeconomists – is unlikely to delay the looming crisis he has been warning about,” Prokopenko said. She said Klepach’s forecasts were “based on assessments of reality rather than a desire to please anyone” and were often more pessimistic than the official figures.

Russia’s economy is facing its most difficult period since the start of Putin’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, strained by massive wartime spending, western sanctions and Ukraine’s growing ability to strike at Moscow’s oil and gas industry.

In the first four months of 2026 alone, Russia’s budget deficit hit 5.87tn roubles (£50bn), well above the government’s 3.79tn-rouble target for the entire year. Some of Putin’s closest advisers have privately warned him that the current level of wartime spending is becoming unsustainable, according to two sources with knowledge of the discussions.

Recently, Ukrainian strikes have hit dozens of warehouses belonging to Wildberries, Russia’s largest e-commerce retailer, destroying billions of dollars’ worth of stock. The attacks have raised questions about the company’s financial stability and dealt a severe blow to thousands of independent sellers who depend on the platform for their livelihoods.

Putin has given no indication that he is prepared to scale back the war or rein in spending. Instead, the Kremlin has sought to raise additional revenue by increasing taxes on smaller businesses and putting pressure on oligarchs to contribute more towards the war effort.

Russia’s finances have been bolstered by this year’s surge in oil prices due to the US war in Iran, providing Moscow with billions of dollars in additional revenue and helping to cushion some of the mounting economic pressure.

▲ *Andrei Klepach was sacked days after the media reported his remarks*

5.87tn

Russia’s budget deficit in roubles, or £50bn, in the first four months of 2026. The full-year target is 3.79tn

Finland halts move to deport Russian family critical of Ukraine war

Miranda Bryant
Nordic correspondent

A Russian family who were on the brink of being deported from Finland after repeatedly being denied asylum – despite the threat of arrest, imprisonment and torture for their pro-Ukrainian activism – have won a court appeal and will now have their case reconsidered.

Nikita Belov and his mother, Olga Belov, fled their homeland for Finland in 2022 after attracting the attention of Russian authorities – including a military summons, threatening messages and attempts to locate them – for expressing opposition to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

They were due to be deported from Finland within weeks after the Finnish immigration service said they faced “no real risk” if they returned to Russia. In April they were temporarily detained by authorities, pending deportation.

Now the administrative court has quashed the decision, citing new evidence, and referred the case back to the immigration service for fresh consideration.

The Belovs’ case has also gained political traction in neighbouring Norway. Last week politicians from Norway’s Green party tried to stage an intervention, proposing to the government that if the Belovs’ deportation went through then Norway should offer them asylum instead.

The political activist and Putin critic Bill Browder, who is the head of the Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign, has said the case was “a defining test of Europe’s commitment to protecting those who have risked everything to oppose [Vladimir] Putin’s war”.

Nikita, 25, left his engineering job at a research institute in Moscow specialising in metallurgical technologies after finding out the work he was doing was connected to the Russian war effort.

▲ *Nikita Belov and his mother, Olga, fled to Finland after receiving threats from Russian authorities over their stance on Ukraine* PHOTOGRAPH: NIKITA BELOV

Since their arrival in Finland, Nikita and Olga, 55, a nurse anaesthetist, have been vocal supporters of Ukraine, sending humanitarian aid, including to the Ukrainian armed forces.

Olga said the court decision marked the first positive news they have received in four years but that it was overshadowed by “constant uncertainty and fear of deportation”.

She added: “My health has deteriorated over these four years, and we still have to wait for a final decision. This is very stressful, and nobody knows how long it will take. This experience has already left a lasting mark on our lives, and we will have to cope with the consequences. No matter what, I’d like to thank everybody who helps us, supports us, and literally saves us from death.”

Nikita said: “Previously, when I imagined my reaction to a positive decision, I was sure it would be a very emotional moment. But actually, I felt nothing. It’s weird, but now it seems to me that I’m already mentally exhausted. We still have to wait for a final decision.”

> ***‘This has left a lasting mark on our lives. We will have to cope with the consequences’***
>
> **Olga Belov**
> *Pro-Ukraine activist*

Their lawyer, who requested not to be named for security reasons, hopes they will be granted asylum soon. “The court has overturned the negative asylum decision as the clients have provided so much new evidence on them being profiled as being at risk of persecution,” their lawyer said.

“The international attention and vast media coverage on the case, and whether it puts them at risk, has to be assessed accurately by the Finnish immigration service.”

Browder, whose friend and lawyer Sergei Magnitsky died at the hands of the Russian president’s regime, said the latest decision was an “important victory for Nikita and Olga, but it should never have got this far”.

He added: “Finland is on the frontline of defending Europe against Putin’s aggression. It would be completely perverse for it to send two people who have stood publicly against that aggression straight back into Putin’s hands.”

The Guardian
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Care of turtle washed up in Wales is going swimmingly well in Texas

Ramon Antonio Vargas

▶ *Rhossi, a rare Kemp's ridley sea turtle who was swept across the Atlantic, is given a CT scan in Houston. It is hoped that one day he will be able to return to the wild in his native Gulf of Mexico*

PHOTOGRAPH: EVAN GARCIA/REUTERS

A Kemp's ridley sea turtle native to the Gulf of Mexico is largely thriving after he was found nearly dead on a beach in Wales in late 2023.

He was nursed back to health and then recently flown to Houston in the US to continue recovering - although scans have revealed signs that the creature has been grappling with lingering pneumonia, according to his carers.

His condition was detailed in a social media post from Houston zoo, whose veterinary team was tasked with caring for Rhossi - believed to be no older than four years old - and giving him the best chance possible of an eventual successful return to the wild.

A local dog discovered a 0.9kg (2lb), cold-stunned Rhossi - who belongs to one of the world's most endangered sea turtle species - on a beach in a Welsh village in December 2023.

Rhossi was about 5,000 miles from the Mexican and US Gulf coast region where Kemp's ridley sea turtles are native.

They have been known to be swept away for vast distances, including across the Atlantic Ocean, by powerful marine currents.

Anglesey Sea zoo took Rhossi in and spent the next two years caring for him. His frame had more than tripled, and he had bulked up to 46lb (21kg) before he took a helicopter ride from Wales to Heathrow airport and then a transatlantic flight to Houston on 10 August.

The Houston zoo's sea turtle staff by then had committed to taking over the administration of Rhossi's recovery.

After an initial evaluation, Rhossi's new carers placed him in a deep-water tank to let him become acclimatised to his new surroundings.

Rhossi then had a more comprehensive medical examination performed by Dr Joe Flanagan, a senior veterinarian who briefly came out of retirement for the assessment, the Houston zoo said.

0.9kg

Rhossi's weight when rescued in 2023. He is now 21kg (46lb) and his frame has more than tripled in size

The turtle had his organ function, eyes, mouth, shell and flippers checked. He also had X-rays and a CT scan to take a closer look at his lungs, according to the Houston zoo.

Rhossi largely acquitted himself as "healthy, active and vigorous" during the examination, the facility reported.

"He's very strong," Flanagan said in a Reuters video report. "He swims normally. He dives. He surfaces. He breathes fine."

But, after having endured the North Atlantic's frigid waters, "his scans revealed a concern for lingering pneumonia", and his return to the Gulf of Mexico would evidently "take a little longer than expected", the zoo wrote.

The zoo added: "Rhossi's medical team will continue to monitor him and provide additional treatment, as needed, to ensure the best possible chance of a successful return to the wild."

Houston's zoo said Rhossi's story illustrated the "incredible dedication and careful coordination of … multiple agencies and non-profit organisations".

The facility specifically mentioned the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Anglesey Sea and Houston teams, the Texas state aquarium and the Welsh helicopter pilot Darren Briggs.

Underlying those efforts is the fact that the population of nesting Kemp's ridley females is estimated to be only between 7,000 and 9,000, according to the Sea Turtle Conservancy.

The US government has considered Kemp's ridleys as endangered since 1970. They are at risk of extinction within the foreseeable future because of threats from humans such as egg collection and killing for products such as meat.

Frankie Hobro, the Anglesey Sea zoo director and owner, was optimistic about Rhossi's future as he settled into the Houston phase of his recovery.

"It looks like in a couple of years, he'll be fit for breeding out in the wild," Hobro said in the Reuters video. "So that's really exciting news for us."

Cash cow: film fans in China milk cartoon's 'so bad it's good' energy

Amy Hawkins

A crude, low-tech animation about a cow and a skylark has become a sleeper hit in China's box office, sitting alongside blockbusters such as The Odyssey and Spider-Man: Brand New Day in cinema revenue rankings.

Niu Lai (The Cow is Coming) is an 86-minute budget animation about a newborn calf and a skylark whose relationship develops over the course of an abstract dream sequence. Released on 5 August, the film reportedly made just 7,700 yuan (£842.41) in its first 10 days of screenings, with fewer than 300 people nationwide buying a ticket.

It did not have any promotional tour, pre-release publicity or even a trailer. But discussion online about how bad the film was turned it into a meme, which drove hordes of film fans to the cinema.

It has now made more than 14.9m yuan according to the movie tracking site Mao Yan. That makes it one of the top performing films of the year in a season that has also seen the release of Christopher Nolan's epic The Odyssey.

The Odyssey earned $28.4m (£21m) across its official three-day opening weekend in China, coming in second place to the homegrown film Once Upon a Time in the Middle East, which tells the story of a Chinese chef who opens a restaurant as conflict erupts in the region. The Chinese film took in 477.9m yuan between 14 and 16 August.

Niu Lai's success appears to stem less from its merits and more from its "so bad it's good" energy.

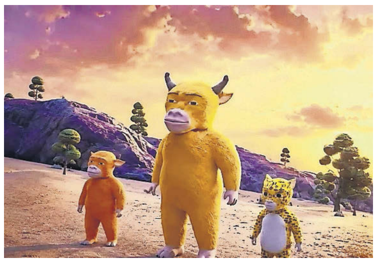
Made by a team of just two people over five years, it is the antithesis of the slick, bedazzling animations that have drawn in huge crowds in China in recent years, such as Ne Zha 2.

The film's writers, directors, voice actors and producers are Xin Yumeng and Sun Lifang, who are reported to be a mother and son team.

Niu Lai's distributor was quoted in Chinese media as saying that he had been advised against releasing the film because of its quality. But he persevered because he was a friend of the director, he said.

Some film fans have praised the shoddy animation as being a welcome tonic in the age of artificial intelligence.

One user wrote on the film review website Douban: "In an era where AI is so popular, did the creative team choose a handcrafted, somewhat crude visual style to convey a sense of 'returning to one's true self'?"



▲ *Niu Lai, or The Cow is Coming, is now an unexpected hit in cinemas*

> *'It is bad in every aspect, including the story, special effects and almost every element that a movie is expected to have'*
>
> **Anonymous**
> *Film industry worker*

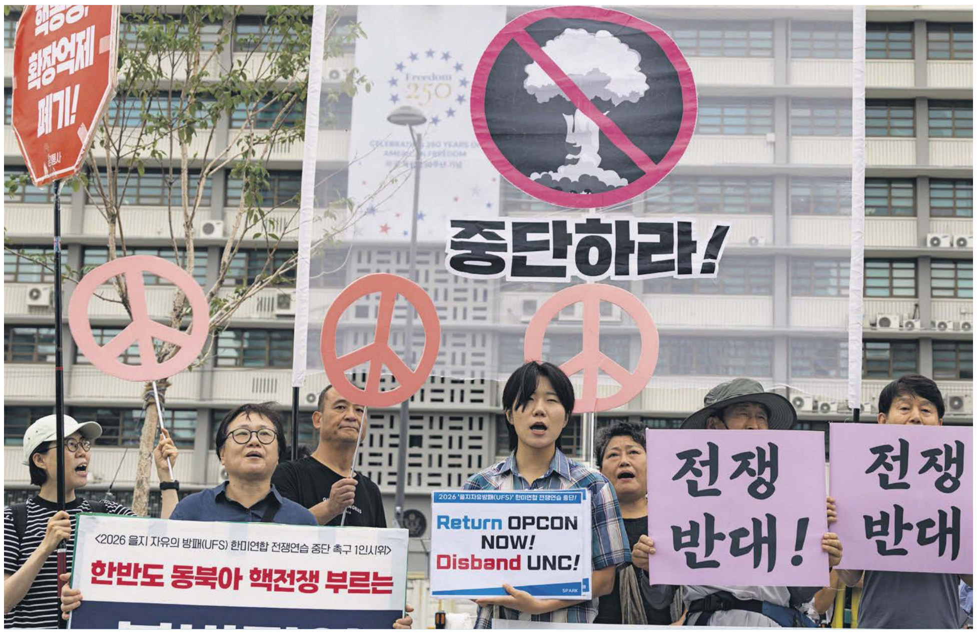
Some cinemagoers were so enraptured they booked seats in theatres to spell out the character for "cow" in their seating arrangement.

One film industry professional who asked to remain anonymous because he was not authorised to speak to the media said that Niu Lai was unique because it was "bad in every aspect imaginable, including the story, special effects and almost every element that a movie is expected to have".

"Ironically, this is exactly what attracted audience curiosity," he said.

Niu Lai's success has not been wholly welcomed by the film industry. Some commentators said that Niu Lai's popularity came at the expense of higher-quality productions.

The film industry professional said Niu Lai's success "feels like an embarrassment to the Chinese film industry".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▲ *A protest outside the US embassy in Seoul against joint US-South Korea military exercises. Left, soldiers from the South's Republic of Korea Army conduct a three-day drill with the US military in Yeoju, South Korea, last year*

PHOTOGRAPHS: JEON HEON-KYUN/EPA; SEUNG-IL RYU/GETTY

Trump orders reduction of US drills with South Korea despite warnings on North

Raphael Rashid
Seoul

Donald Trump has said he is scaling back joint US military drills with South Korea aimed at deterring North Korea, despite military officials warning that Kim Jong-un's regime is learning new battlefield tactics from the Ukraine war.

The drills under Ulchi Freedom Shield, one of two major annual exercises held by South Korea and the US, started yesterday and run until 27 August. They were expected to involve about 18,000 South Korean troops, alongside US forces and personnel from 11 of the 18 member states of the United Nations Command (UNC), the multinational body that oversees the 1953 armistice that halted hostilities of the Korean war.

However, on Sunday evening the president said he was "not happy" with US participation "based on my very good relationship with Kim Jong-un". He added the drills were costly and "send a signal that is totally inappropriate and hostile, to a country that, as long as Donald J Trump has been president, has been unthreatening and respectful".

The move prompted criticism, with Democrats in Congress saying it handed Kim a propaganda win for nothing, while an ally was left paying the price for a war in the Middle East it never agreed to fight.

The US senator Jack Reed, the top Democrat on the Senate armed services committee, called it "another inane, haphazard decision by … Trump and his chaotic administration".

Trump added that it was too late to cancel the drills so he had ordered the defence secretary, Pete Hegseth, to "substantially reduce" them. He also said South Korea had refused to help in the "denuclearisation of the Islamic republic of Iran".

South Korea's presidential Blue House said it was reviewing Trump's post and "hopes that the friendly relationship between the US and North Korean leaders will lead to meaningful dialogue … aimed at advancing peace and stability on the Korean peninsula".

The allies would continue coordinating on their combined defence posture and military exercises, it said. On Saturday, Trump also shared on Truth Social an old photo of him posing with the North Korean leader, repeating his claim that the two "get along great", leading to speculation he would renew his attempt to have a summit with Kim.

Trump has previously suspended major US-South Korean military exercises in pursuit of diplomacy with Kim. After his first summit with the North Korean leader in 2018, that year's Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercise was cancelled, while other drills were suspended or scaled back. The exercises were subsequently redesigned and resumed in modified forms and names.

Cheong Seong-chang, the vice-president of the Seoul-based Sejong Institute thinktank, said Trump could go further if he meets Kim again, potentially deciding to suspend the exercises altogether or reduce US troop levels without consulting South Korea.

He added that the US-South Korea alliance remained "extremely important" but argued that Seoul should gradually reduce its security dependence on Washington and move towards securing its own nuclear deterrent capability.

However, Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul, cautioned that downsizing the exercise could slow that process.

"The cost savings from downsizing drills are marginal, while the diplomatic benefits for relations with North Korea are doubtful," he said.

Lim Eul-chul, a North Korea expert

▶ *A photograph released by the North Korean government showing Kim Jong-un with his daughter observing what it says is a test launch for a new ballistic missile*

PHOTOGRAPH: KOREAN CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY/KOREA NEWS SERVICE VIA AP

E Jean Carroll case
US court dismisses appeal

The US supreme court has once again declined to consider Donald Trump's appeal against a jury verdict in 2023 that found him liable for sexually abusing the writer E Jean Carroll, and later defaming her.

The court announced the decision in an unsigned order yesterday, without providing an explanation. The order just listed the US president's petition under "rehearings denied".

Roberta Kaplan, Carroll's attorney, said: "We are pleased that the United States supreme court has declined again to hear this case. As a result, the jury's unanimous verdict that Donald Trump sexually assaulted and then defamed E Jean Carroll is now final and cannot be challenged in any court."

In 2025, Trump – who has denied Carroll's allegations against him – asked the supreme court to review the case and overturn the verdict.

Carroll's lawyers urged the justices to reject his petition and in June this year the supreme court declined to hear Trump's appeal. His lawyers then asked the justices to reconsider.

Yesterday's decision leaves intact the $5m (£3.7m) civil judgment against Trump.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment yesterday about the supreme court's decision.
Anna Betts

▲ *South Korean soldiers deploy a floating bridge during a river-crossing drill with the US military last year in Yeoju, south-east of Seoul*

PHOTOGRAPH: YONHAP/EPA

at Kyungnam University, added that Pyongyang was unlikely to be moved by Trump's announcement. "The North will only view it as meaningful if the joint exercises are cancelled."

Last week, South Korean and US military officials said they would incorporate into the drills lessons drawn from North Korean troops' increasing battlefield experience in Ukraine, including new drone tactics.

North Korea has deepened military ties with Russia since the two countries signed a strategic partnership pact in June 2024, seeing Pyongyang provide troops, artillery ammunition and ballistic missiles to support Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Col Ryan Donald, the public affairs director for the US-led commands in South Korea, said this year's scenario would reflect "drones, GPS disruption [and] cyber-attacks", threats he linked directly to North Korean soldiers who have fought in Ukraine.

"They've taken those lessons they learned there and brought them back to North Korea," Donald said. "Our training accounts for that threat."

Lt Gen Scott Winter, deputy commander of the UNC, said the threats being countered "reflect the increased use of these technologies and the understanding that North Korea has contemporary battlefield experience".

In the days before the exercise was due to begin, North Korea test-fired ballistic missiles.

On Friday, North Korea's foreign ministry called the exercise "a rehearsal for an aggressive war", warning it would "respond to a new level of a threat with a new level of a deterrent".

Midterm malaise Is president losing his touch amid endless war and 'monuments to self'?

David Smith
Washington

He was always one step ahead. Donald Trump won the US presidency as a wildly unlikely outsider in 2016 and staged an astonishing comeback to win it again in 2024. Even his foes grudgingly called him a political savant with an intuition for exploiting grievances that left so-called experts floundering.

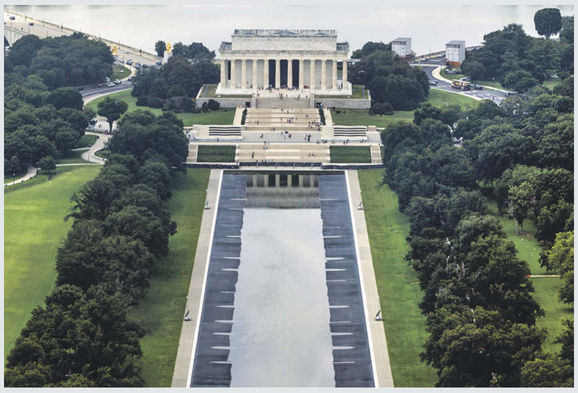
But now they are asking if he has lost his touch. Trump is trapped in the quagmire of an unpopular war, obsessing over monuments in Washington and looking for a new spokesperson. If the 80-year-old was deliberately trying to sabotage his Republican party in November's midterm elections, it is not clear what he would do differently.

"He's always had a reptilian political instinct for public opinion that has served him well," said Charlie Sykes, a conservative author and broadcaster. "You're not seeing that much any more. You're not seeing his ability to read the room. He seems tone-deaf on issues like the cost of living, the war, and the optics of gilding everything in sight and enshittifying Washington, and he doesn't care."

Trump campaigned on promises to lower prices and keep the US out of foreign entanglements and forever wars. Voters say they are suffering a cost of living crisis, exacerbated by his sweeping tariffs. Buying food to eat at home has become 33% more expensive in US cities since the beginning of 2019, according to government figures.

Petrol prices are at a record high for this time of year, in part thanks to the US war in Iran. The entanglement has metastasised into a gruelling haemorrhage of resources, costing the taxpayer an estimated $1bn a day. Critics argue the administration has strengthened Iran's resolve and provided it with global leverage, specifically over the strait of Hormuz. They see it as betrayal of the noninterventionist posture that fuelled Trump's rise to power and attracted disaffected voters.

Kurt Bardella, a political pundit and former congressional aide, said: "What we're watching right now is the complete unravelling of everything that Donald Trump, Maga and Republicans said they were about. They were against endless conflicts in the Middle East and they started a conflict in the Middle East without an exit strategy. They were supposed to be about no more spending American dollars abroad; we're spending a billion dollars a day on this war without an end."



▲ *The Lincoln Memorial reflecting pool became a stagnant pond with blooming algae after an attempted makeover*

PHOTOGRAPH: WILL OLIVER/EPA

'It's a terrible look and it's quite dangerous for the party because they have nothing to run on'

Rick Wilson
Lincoln Project

Donald Trump: an 'egomaniac and narcissist'

Yet the president appears to have other, more aesthetic concerns. Since returning to power, he has invested much time and energy in Washington construction projects, including a White House ballroom and helipad, a triumphal arch and an ill-fated makeover of the Lincoln Memorial reflecting pool.

Bardella said: "As he continues this misadventure in the Middle East that has resulted in the cost of living going up, and continues to pour resources into putting his name on shit and building ballrooms and monuments to himself, the American people are going: what the fuck? That's the only realistic reaction you could have when you objectively look at the circumstances."

Trump's second term has been defined by thinking big – Greenland, Venezuela, Iran – and small. The board he appointed to the John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts added his name to the complex, only for a judge to order that it be removed; this week the board voted to add "Restored and Renovated by President Donald J Trump" beneath the main sign. According to Regime Change: Inside the Imperial Presidency of Donald Trump, written by the New York Times journalists Maggie Haberman and Jonathan Swan, the president has been seen with a tube of superglue trying to stick golden decorations to the marble fireplace in the Oval Office.

Haberman estimates Trump now devotes 70% of his mental space to renovation projects and "monuments to self". She told Axios she and Swan visited the Oval Office in March. "You would think that on the 17th day of the war that he would have maps of the Middle East or maps of troop deployments – who knows," she said. "He picks up these pictures, and [they're] of maple trees, and he says: 'I am choosing maple trees for the White House. I am good at picking trees.' I'm paraphrasing here, but that is pretty much what he said."

The president's preoccupation with whether columns for his ballroom are more evocative of Athens or Rome, and with other efforts to preserve his legacy in marble, comes as little surprise to Tara Setmayer, a former Republican communications director on Capitol Hill. "Donald Trump has been an egomaniac, a narcissist his entire life," she said.

"Even in the private sector he has slapped his name on buildings and a multitude of failed branding businesses from Trump steaks to Trump airline to Trump University to Trump water to Trump wine. Why is anyone surprised that he would take that same type of narcissism and bring it over to his role in his second term as president when he's spending other people's money to do it?

"The problem has been that the Republican party has enabled him to get away with this and to their own detriment, which is why more and more people in his inner circle are concerned about how this is going to impact the midterms and control of Congress."

Indeed, Republicans are said to be quietly panicking about Trump costing them the House of Representatives and putting even the Senate in jeopardy. A national Quinnipiac University poll late last month showed his job approval rating dropping to an all-time low of 32%, with 58% disapproval. It found six in 10 Americans oppose the US military action in Iran.

George W Bush in 2006 and Barack Obama in 2010 faced challenging midterms but worked with their parties in an effort to at least stem the losses. Rick Wilson of the Lincoln Project, an anti-Trump group, said: "It's nightmarish to think what would have been if Barack Obama had been saying, 'I'm going to build a basketball arena at the White House,' or George Bush had said, 'I'm gonna build a golf course.'

"Instead you've got a very different visual from this White House and that visual is 'we don't care about anything else except for the ballroom and the arch' and all the throwaway ephemera that he wants to focus on. It's a terrible political look and it's quite dangerous for the party because they have nothing to run on."

The sense of malaise deepened this week when Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, said she would be stepping down. The explanation was that she wants to spend more time with her young family, but the timing was unfortunate for an administration struggling to spin its way out of one crisis after another.

Trump's cloud does have a golden lining, however. He made an estimated $2.2bn during the first year of his second term thanks to cryptocurrency holdings, foreign interests and his Truth Social business. Sykes said: "He hasn't lowered the cost of living, he hasn't made America more respected, he hasn't won the war but he has succeeded in making himself a billionaire many times over by abusing his office."

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SOURCE: ICE www.ice.com/data

Business

Economists urge UK to join UN initiative to tackle inequality

Heather Stewart
Economics editor

Forty prominent progressive academics are urging Andy Burnham's government to join a new global initiative to tackle inequality.

The experts include Nobel winner Joseph Stiglitz, University College London professor Mariana Mazzucato, vice-chancellor of the London School of Economics Larry Kramer, and Kate Pickett, co-author of The Spirit Level.

In an open letter they call on Burnham to sign the UK up to help create a new International Panel on Inequality (IPI), which is being developed at the United Nations.

"The organising principle of the prime minister's policy agenda - the Makerfield test - aims to ensure that places forgotten by Westminster finally receive fairness after decades of neglect," they say in the letter. "While these efforts are commendable, inequality is also a global issue, becoming more entrenched as the geopolitical climate destabilises."

They say the IPI will provide "an independent, trusted global evidence base on the causes and consequences of inequality, alongside analysis of the policies that can reduce it".

By backing it, they argue, Burnham could "cement the organising principles of his politics globally".

Charities, thinktanks and backbench MPs have been urging the new prime minister to use the UK's turn to chair the G20 next year to reclaim Labour's leadership on global development. The G20 is an economic policy forum that brings together leaders from global south countries such as China, India and Brazil, as well as the traditional G7 powers.

"With the UK set to chair the G20 in 2027, Burnham now has a chance to demonstrate his leadership on the world stage," the letter says.

> ***'Burnham now has a chance to demonstrate his leadership on the world stage'***
>
> **Open letter from 40 prominent academics**

Echoing the approach of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the new body - to be chaired by Stiglitz - will track extreme wealth disparities and recommend global policy solutions. Brazil, South Africa, Norway and Spain have been involved in setting it up.

The academics, led by Pickett, a professor at York University, urge Burnham to use his attendance at the UN general assembly next month to signal the UK's support for the idea. They point to Burnham's record on championing the issue of inequality as mayor of Greater Manchester - the role he held for nine years before becoming prime minister last month.

Under Keir Starmer, Labour slashed aid spending to increase the defence budget, prompting the resignation of the then development minister Anneliese Dodds.

The foreign secretary, Ed Miliband, has signalled that he wants to make international development more central to Labour's priorities - including by taking up the UK's seat on the board of the World Bank himself.

Responding to the academics' letter, Lord Wood, the Foreign Office minister for growth, said: "Changing the way our economy works so that it is fairer and more productive is not just about what we do at home. It also requires that we work in partnership with other countries and international institutions to strengthen the global economy.

"That's why this government will work with allies to build the coalition we need for economic change - to boost global growth, combat inequality, make our international financial institutions more effective, and back more coordinated development support and climate action."

China's slowing economy adds to pressure on policymakers to intervene

Richard Partington
Senior economics correspondent

China's economy is showing signs of extending a slowdown with a slump in industrial output and retail sales in July, adding to pressure on Beijing to intervene with measures to support activity.

After the world's second largest economy posted one of its lowest quarterly growth readings on record in the three months to June, figures suggest it continued to falter in July.

Factory output grew 4.5% from a year earlier last month, compared with 5.3% in June, official figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed yesterday, missing a Reuters poll forecast for 4.8% growth.

Retail sales grew 0.6%, a slowdown from a 1% rise in June despite summer holiday tourism spending. Forecasters had predicted 1.5%.

The NBS said extreme weather, including high temperatures and heavy rainfall, had disrupted market supply and demand.

The latest snapshot is likely to increase pressure on policymakers to accelerate plans for tax and spending measures to support activity.

▲ *Workers in Jinhua produce stress-relief toys for export. China's factory output grew by just 4.5% in July*
PHOTOGRAPH: VCG/GETTY IMAGES

China's premier, Li Qiang, suggested that efforts to bolster overseas demand for goods could be used to make up for weak domestic demand.

"Currently, the problem of insufficient domestic demand remains prominent, some industries and enterprises are facing increasing difficulties, and uncertainties in external environment are rising," Li told a meeting of China's state council, according to the state news agency, Xinhua. "We should actively stabilise external demand, expand mutually beneficial international economic and trade cooperation and promote balanced trade development."

Analysts say they expect stronger growth rates later this year, supported by spending measures from Beijing to increase activity.

"The silver lining is that the boost to manufacturing activity from AI capex [capital expenditure] continued to build, and that the wider weakness partly reflects temporary disruptions from recent typhoons," said Julian Evans-Pritchard, the head of China economics at Capital Economics. "We still expect a modest uptick in growth over the rest of the year, supported by fiscal loosening."

China posted a worse-than-expected annualised growth rate of 4.3% in the three months to June.

The rate, which came in under the government's target of 4.5% to 5%, was one of the weakest since Beijing began reporting official quarterly GDP data in the early 1990s.

Half of homes take longer to sell this year amid mortgage volatility

Richard Partington
Senior economics correspondent

Half of homes in Great Britain are taking longer to sell than last year as volatile conditions in the mortgage market amid the Iran war lead buyers to "wait and see" if they can get a better deal, according to a report.

As the Middle East conflict continues to unfold, the property platform Zoopla said homes in 180 out of 363 local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales were taking longer to sell compared with a year ago.

It said that although the national average time to sell a home had not changed - at 42 days - a widening regional gap had emerged as buyers in property hotspots raced to complete deals, while uncertainty over mortgage costs fuelled a more cautious approach elsewhere.

The report found the UK's 10 fastest-selling markets were all in Scotland, with the lowest average time to sell at just 11 days in Falkirk. Carlisle and Barnsley in England were the fastest non-Scottish markets at 23 days each.

It said eight local authorities had an average time to sell of two months or more, led by Melton in the East Midlands, at 76 days, Westminster in London and Teignbridge in Devon.

Property buyers shopping for a mortgage deal have faced months of heightened volatility as the stop-start Iran war rattles financial markets - with a knock-on impact for the pricing of home loans.

The war in the Middle East led many lenders to withdraw deals in March, while the cost of a typical home loan soared amid fears that the conflict would reignite global inflationary pressures and force the Bank of England to raise interest rates.

The latest figures from the financial data provider Moneyfacts show the rate on an average two-year fixed residential mortgage stood at 5.61% yesterday - significantly higher than the rate of 4.83% before the outbreak of the conflict at the end of February.

The rate peaked at close to 6% in April. However, uncertainty remains as the Iran war continues to unfold, in a challenge for Threadneedle Street's rate-setters.

Financial markets anticipate two quarter-point rises in the Bank's base rate, from the current 3.75% before the end of next year.

Richard Donnell, a Zoopla executive director, said: "While the national time to sell has barely moved, that stability is masking a real divide opening up between local markets."

Leading economies' borrowing costs hit highest level since 2008

Graeme Wearden

Government borrowing costs in several advanced economies hit their highest level since the 2008 financial crisis, or even earlier, yesterday, as investors feared the Middle East crisis would keep inflation persistently high. Concerns over rising prices and government spending pushed up the cost of debt issued by Paris, Berlin, Washington DC, Tokyo and London, as investors fretted that rising prices would push up interest rates.

The yield, or interest rate, on 30-year French bonds rose to its highest level since September 2008 at 4.8558%, up one basis point (0.01 percentage point), LSEG data showed.

France's 10-year bond yield hit its highest level since June 2009, up one basis point to 4.0516%. The equivalent German bond rose to its highest yield since 2011 at 3.2138%, up 1.5 basis points.

Fears that central banks would continue to tighten monetary policy, to prevent inflation bursting out of control, pushed up bond yields as traders sought a higher rate of return for holding government debt.

The money markets indicate there is almost an 85% chance that the European Central Bank will raise interest rates in September.

US government long-term borrowing costs also hit their highest level since the financial crisis, with the 30-year Treasury yield rising to 5.29%, its highest level since 2007.

UK and Italian government bond prices, which fall when yield rise, dipped.

Japan's 10-year government bond yield hit a three-decade high, as investors anticipated the Bank of Japan would need to raise interest rates as soon as September, in an attempt to prop up the yen.

The 10-year Japanese government bond yield rose to 2.93%, its highest level since September 1996, before dipping back slightly after Japan's latest GDP report showed growth was weaker than expected in April-June.

Axel Rudolph, a chief technical analyst at IG, said: "Japan's bond market is clearly becoming less forgiving, and the BoJ may soon have to choose between supporting a fragile economy and containing inflation."

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JP Morgan boss warns chancellor not to raise bank taxes

Lauren Almeida

Jamie Dimon, the boss of the US bank JP Morgan, has urged John Healey not to use his first budget as chancellor to increase taxes on banks' bumper profits.

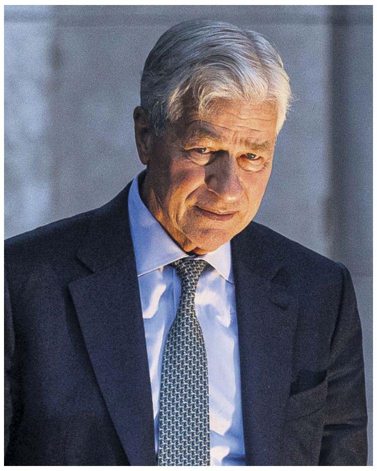
Speculation has been growing that a windfall tax could be imposed on UK lenders to fund Andy Burnham's cost of living agenda, with campaigners estimating such a move could raise £19bn.

Dimon told Healey in a phone conversation that higher levies could hit jobs, citing a fall in finance roles in New York that he blamed on the city's tax regime.

One person familiar with the conversation said the chief executive of the world's biggest bank had told Healey that "getting public policy right" was at "the root of solving the problems facing all our economies".

They said Dimon's comments on tax were not specific to the UK and did not have "any link" to plans to build a new headquarters in London.

They added that Dimon was the first among many bank bosses to have an introductory call with the new chancellor, and that calls with other chief executives would follow this week.



▲ *Jamie Dimon told John Healey that higher bank levies could hit jobs*

The Wall Street billionaire's remarks, first reported by the Financial Times, were condemned by Paul Nowak, the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

"People are sick and tired of being told they have to tighten their belts while profits, dividends and bankers' bonuses hit record highs," Nowak said. "The new chancellor has a clear opportunity to show working people he's on their side by asking banks to pay fair taxes to cut energy bills."

Dimon has a long record of criticising Britain's additional bank taxes, which were imposed after the government bailed out big UK lenders in the 2008 financial crisis.

Lenders in the UK pay a 28% corporation tax rate, higher than the standard 25%, as well as a separate surcharge on their UK balance sheets.

The JP Morgan CEO said in July that raising these taxes further could have "adverse consequences", telling the Master Investor podcast: "It would be one more negative on that bucket of things you got to think about."

Dimon, who was also among the bank bosses who successfully lobbied against higher taxes in Rachel Reeves's budget last year, announced plans the day after the budget to build a 3m sq ft tower in London's Canary Wharf district, with the caveat that a "continuing positive business environment in the UK" was required.

In May this year, he said he could scrap plans for the £3bn tower, which is expected to serve as the bank's UK headquarters and house more than half of its 23,000 UK workforce, if Keir Starmer were to be replaced by a new prime minister who was hostile to banks.

Burnham and Healey have not made any specific comments about a bank tax so far. However, they have faced many calls to increase the levy.

Collectively, the UK's four largest lenders - HSBC, NatWest, Barclays and Lloyds - reported £29.2bn in profits over the first six months of the year, with almost half, £13.7bn, pledged to investors through dividends and share buybacks.

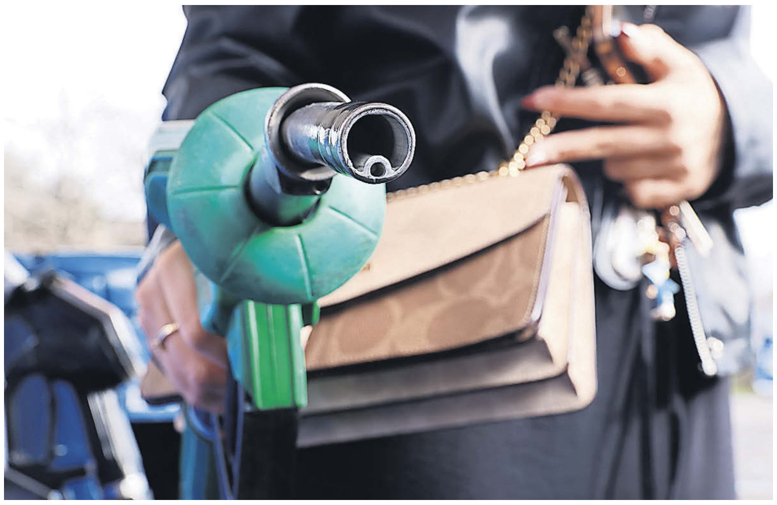
The TUC is calling for the government to increase the bank surcharge, saying that a 16% rate would deliver £24bn over the next four years, while 35% would deliver £60bn over the same period.

Simon Youel, the head of advocacy at the campaign group Positive Money, said: "Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves had a chance to recoup banks' huge windfalls at the last budget, but instead they chose to raise taxes on ordinary people. Hopefully Andy Burnham and John Healey won't be fooled by the industry's lobbyists into making the same mistake."

JP Morgan declined to comment.

The inflation trap

Central banks in a bind over raising rates amid wars



▼ *The Middle East crisis has pushed up oil prices, stoking inflation, and adding to pressure on interest rates*

PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD/THE GUARDIAN

Phillip Inman

As the Middle East crisis drags on into its sixth month, central banks sit in a tricky position. Oil prices remain at elevated levels, stoking inflationary pressures while also threatening to weigh on growth.

The US Federal Reserve, the Bank of England and the European Central Bank (ECB) are still smarting from the criticism of their inaction in 2022, when inflation soared above 10% in the UK and eurozone and over 9% in the US.

Central banks were plagued by accusations that they moved too slowly to confront inflation in the months after the Ukraine war started, when post-pandemic consumer spending was already stoking prices of everything from food to construction materials.

Now they are asking whether the continuing throttling of fossil fuel shipping through the strait of Hormuz will mean another year of target-busting prices growth.

The Federal Reserve seeks help

Last month US inflation edged lower to 3.4%, down from 3.5% in June and 4.2% in May, largely in response to easing petrol prices following the US memorandum of understanding with Iran.

Since the Bureau of Labor Statistics collected the data, the price of a barrel of Brent crude has risen again to about $90 (£78) - a figure that will push up the price of energy and transport across the US in the second half of the year.

Fed officials are asking whether US inflation will climb back towards 4%, double its target. The US central bank's new boss, Kevin Warsh, has instigated an all-embracing review of its operations based on the advice of 15 outsiders who he says are among the most eminent experts and economists of the age.

Many analysts have applauded him for recognising that a series of inflation shocks dating back to the arrival of Covid-19 have undermined the integrity and durability of central bank forecasting.

Mohamed El-Erian, an economist and professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton business school, said Warsh recognised that many of the shibboleths of monetary policymaking had proved flawed.

GTS
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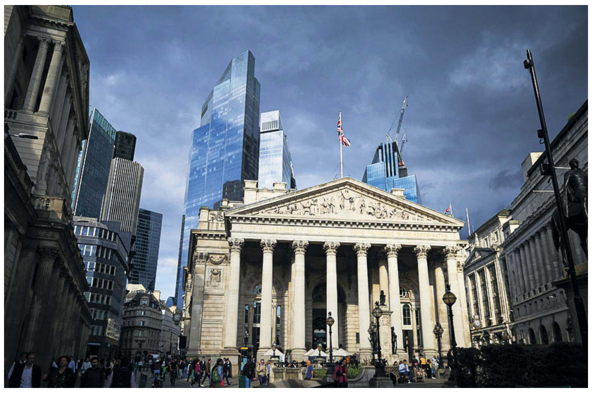
POST 8
NYSE
AN ICE EXCHANGE
KB
RAYONIER



▲ *A trader watches a press conference by the Fed chair, Kevin Warsh. Left, the Bank of England is expected to raise rates this year*

PHOTOGRAPHS; BRENDAN MCDERMID/REUTERS; CHRISTOPHER THOMOND/THE GUARDIAN

"The key issue for me is having someone there who's committed to long-overdue Fed reforms. This is essential for future Fed effectiveness, credibility and political independence," he said.

Chief among the tools that Warsh has already ditched is forward guidance - the explicit signalling of the likely future path of interest rates. He also declined to join other Fed policymakers in creating dot plots on a graph showing how the economy and inflation are expected to develop over the next few years.

Among Warsh's 15 appointments to five subject committees is Mervyn King, a former governor of the Bank of England. Lord King is considered a founding father of inflation forecasting, but has since argued that central banks should take more account of uncertainty in how people react and ditch a heavy reliance on economic models that claim to predict likely outcomes.

In his 2020 book Radical Uncertainty, he described forward guidance as "silly" when no central bank knows what the interest rate will be in six months or two years.

El-Erian calls forward guidance "spurious accuracy". What financial markets and the public need to know is the "reaction function". In other words, how the central bank will respond to different economic developments.

Charlie Bean, a professor at the London School of Economics and a former deputy governor of the Bank, said Warsh's changes meant that Fed watchers did not have guidance on either the path of rates or the Fed's reaction to events.

"Warsh … is not giving a guide to where rates are going and also not talking about how changes in the economy will affect rates," said Bean. "It means he is not saying anything of substance."

The Fed held rates in July and financial market betting expects a hold again in September, though a rise is thought possible. Markets anticipate at least one, and possibly two, quarter-point increases by the middle of next year, taking the Fed's target rate from its current 3.5-3.75% range to 4-4.25%.

The Bank of England suffers a post-Covid hangover

While the BoE is widely considered to have acted consistently since the start of the Iran war - saying it will raise the cost of borrowing should there be any signs of persistent inflation. However, the decision to hold the Bank Rate steady at 3.75% could come under pressure.

The UK consumer prices index (CPI) dropped to 2.6% in June, but some analysts expect it to rise to 2.9% or even 3% when July's figures are published by the Office for National Statistics tomorrow.

A majority of the nine-member monetary policy committee (MPC) are wary of increasing interest rates when it will have little effect on global oil prices, aware that higher borrowing costs could depress an already weak UK economy.

Bean says the MPC is also under pressure from even more fundamental trends, including high and rising government debt.

The difficulty arises when governments are highly indebted and a central bank wants to raise interest rates to control inflation. A rise in the cost of borrowing increases the government's debt financing bill. Central banks must decide whether to cripple the government's finances or let inflation remain high for a longer period above its target.

Neil Shearing, the chief economist of the consultancy Capital Economics, says he has argued for many years that central banks will preside over high inflation for as long as western governments cannot control their debt-fuelled spending. "The conceit is that central banks need to maintain 2% as their target, while at the same time tolerating a slightly higher level of inflation," he said.

Making matters worse, most inflationary shocks come from global events that restrict the supply of essential goods. Interest rate rises dampen consumer spending with little effect on the price of imported goods.

Nevertheless, financial markets predict the Bank will raise rates this year, possibly from as early as its next meeting in September on the path to pushing rates as high as 4.25% by late 2027.

The ECB goes rogue

Unlike the Fed and the Bank, the ECB has raised the cost of borrowing this year. Critics say it moved too quickly.

It raised interest rates in June after only a modest rise in inflation caused by the Middle East war. Many economists said this was too early when much of the eurozone economy continues to be devastated by the energy shock after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Shearing said: "The ECB was clearly fighting the previous war and prematurely raising rates. The underlying picture in the eurozone is one of weakness." He is among many analysts who believe markets are wrong to expect the ECB will raise its main deposit rate by a quarter-point to 2.5% in September and possibly a further quarter-point increase next year.

Shearing says that while high oil prices put pressure on inflation, they act as a brake on economic activity, as a rise in rates would also do. It would be like kicking the economy when it is already down.

$90

Current price of a barrel of Brent crude, which will push up the price of energy and transport across the US

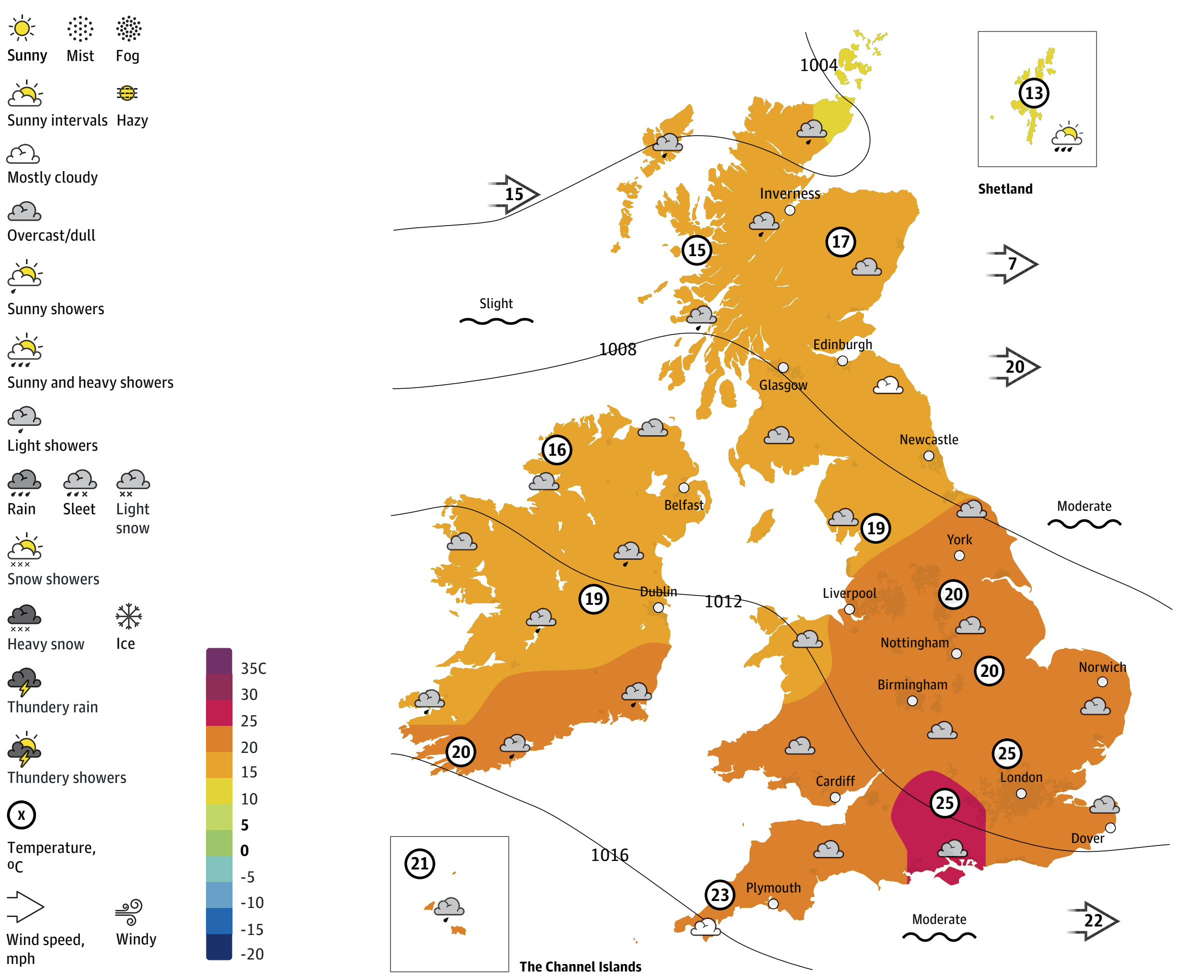
4.25%

Bank of England interest rate by late 2027, as predicted by financial markets - up from 3.75% this year

Weather

Tuesday 18 August 2026

UK and Ireland Noon today


Sunny
Mist
Fog
Sunny intervals
Hazy
Mostly cloudy
Overcast/dull
Sunny showers
Sunny and heavy showers
Light showers
Rain
Sleet
Light snow
Snow showers
Heavy snow
Ice
Thundery rain
Thundery showers
X
Temperature, ºC
Wind speed, mph
Windy
35C
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
-5
-10
-15
-20
1004
15
Inverness
15
17
Shetland
13
7
Slight
1008
Edinburgh
Glasgow
20
16
Newcastle
Belfast
Moderate
19
York
19
Dublin
1012
Liverpool
20
Nottingham
Norwich
20
Birmingham
20
25
Cardiff
London
25
1016
Dover
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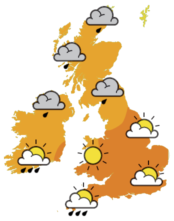
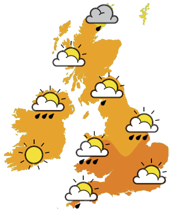
Plymouth
Moderate
22
The Channel Islands

Forecast

Low **12** High **19**
Tomorrow



Low **12** High **18**
Thursday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

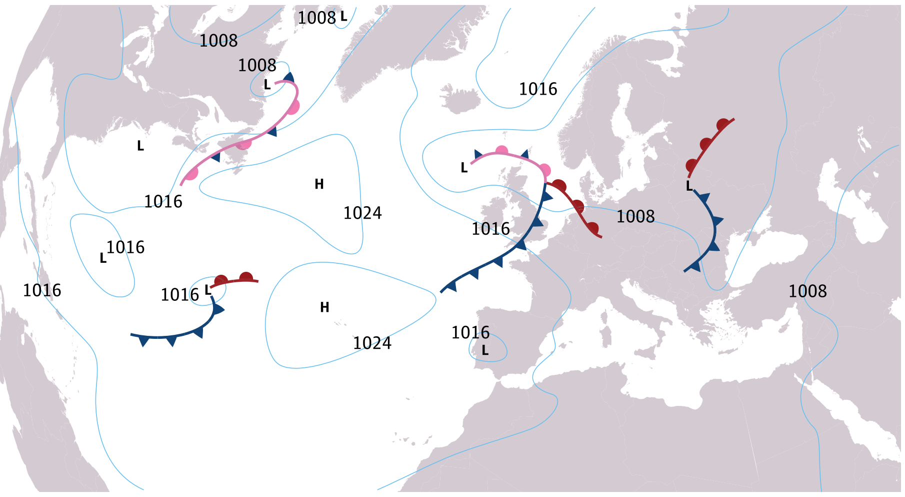
Latest	
14 Aug 2026	427.80
Weekly average	
09 Aug 2026	427.59
17 Aug 2025	425.53
17 Aug 2016	403.08
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs		Precipitation	Air pollution
London	15	25	55%	Low
Manchester	12	19	55%	Low
Edinburgh	11	18	85%	Low
Belfast	11	18	85%	Low
Birmingham	13	22	55%	Low
Brighton	14	22	25%	Low
Bristol	14	21	10%	Low
Cardiff	14	21	55%	Low
Newcastle	11	19	80%	Low
Penzance	16	21	25%	Low

Atlantic front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Cold front
Warm front
Occluded front
Trough

Weather tracker

Relief from the unrelenting heat is finally arriving this week across western Europe, with more unsettled conditions bringing the chance of rain. Temperatures are expected to fall back towards the seasonal norm, with some parts of the UK even falling about 3C below normal by Thursday. After such a scorching summer, and with a temperature drop of more than 15C compared with last Thursday's heat, it may feel surprisingly chilly.

There are signs that some substantial rain could be on the cards for the south of the UK this week as a cold front moves in from the Atlantic. The more interesting weather arrives from tomorrow into the weekend, as low pressure moves across the UK, bringing frequent sharp showers and potentially thundery downpours. After such a prolonged dry spell, even a few substantial bursts of rain will make a noticeable difference to the environment.

Continental Europe is also likely to turn wetter as the main cold front sinks southwards into France and Germany tomorrow. Farther south, rainfall is likely to be more hit and miss, relying heavily on showers and thunderstorms, with this risk really rising from Thursday.

Jodie Woodcock *MetDesk*

High tides

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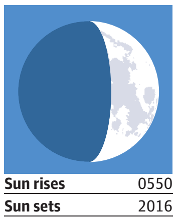
Aberdeen	**0438**	4.1m	**1710**	3.7m
Avonmouth	**1034**	12.1m	**2245**	11.9m
Barrow	**0235**	8.8m	**1457**	8.3m
Belfast	**0229**	3.5m	**1458**	3.1m
Cobh	**0851**	3.7m	**2109**	3.7m
Cromer	**0943**	4.9m	**2221**	4.4m
Dover	**0223**	6.3m	**1440**	6.5m
Dublin	**0243**	3.9m	**1512**	3.5m
Galway	**0839**	4.6m	**2057**	4.5m
Greenock	**0334**	3.6m	**1613**	3.1m
Harwich	**0305**	3.8m	**1513**	3.9m
Holyhead	**0130**	5.3m	**1353**	4.9m
Hull	**0932**	7.3m	**2157**	6.6m
Leith	**0603**	5.3m	**1826**	4.9m
Liverpool	**0215**	9.0m	**1435**	8.5m
London Bridge	**0517**	6.8m	**1728**	6.8m
Lossiemouth	**0259**	3.9m	**1529**	3.5m
Milford Haven	**0936**	6.3m	**2152**	6.3m
Newquay	**0830**	6.2m	**2046**	6.1m
North Shields	**0643**	4.9m	**1914**	4.4m
Oban	**0853**	3.4m	**2102**	3.4m
Penzance	**0800**	5.0m	**2016**	5.0m
Plymouth	**0909**	5.0m	**2113**	5.0m
Portsmouth	**0249**	4.4m	**1521**	4.5m
Southport	**0142**	8.7m	**1402**	8.2m
Stornoway	**1014**	4.1m	**2223**	4.1m
Portland	**1003**	1.8m	**2210**	1.8m
Whitby	**0718**	5.4m	**1947**	4.9m
Wick	**0232**	3.3m	**1457**	3.0m
Workington	**0238**	7.9m	**1503**	7.4m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0550
Sun sets	2016
Moon rises	1307
Moon sets	2151
First Quarter	20 Aug

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2026

Lighting up

Belfast	2050 to 0608
Birm'ham	2026 to 0556
Brighton	2015 to 0554
Bristol	2027 to 0603
Carlisle	2038 to 0553
Cork	2051 to 0625
Dublin	2047 to 0612
Glasgow	2047 to 0557
Harlech	2037 to 0605
Inverness	2051 to 0550
London	2016 to 0552
M'chester	2031 to 0556
Newcastle	2033 to 0549
Norwich	2015 to 0544
Penzance	2035 to 0617

Around the world

☀	Algiers	36
🌦	Ams'dam	21
☀	Athens	31
☀	Auckland	14
☁	B Aires	12
🌦	Bangkok	34
☀	Barcelona	32
🌫	Basra	47
🌧	Beijing	31
☁	Berlin	20
☀	Bermuda	30
🌦	Brussels	22
🌥	Budapest	26
☁	C'hagen	18
🌫	Cairo	33
🌥	Cape Town	18
⛈	Chicago	28
🌦	Corfu	32
⛈	Dakar	32
🌧	Dhaka	30
🌦	Dublin	18
🌥	Florence	35
🌥	Gibraltar	29
🌧	H Kong	32
🌫	Harare	25
☁	Helsinki	20
☀	Istanbul	28
☀	Jo'burg	24
⛈	K Lumpur	33
⛈	K'mandu	28
🌫	Kabul	34
🌥	Kingston	34
🌧	Kolkata	30
🌥	L Angeles	32
⛈	Lagos	28
🌥	Lima	24
☀	Lisbon	29
☀	Madrid	38
☀	Malaga	33
☀	Melb'rne	18
🌦	Mexico C	25
☀	Miami	37
🌥	Milan	33
☀	Mombasa	28
☁	Moscow	22
🌧	Mumbai	31
⛈	N Orleans	36
🌦	Nairobi	23
🌦	New Delhi	32
☀	New York	28
🌥	Oslo	20
☁	Paris	26
☁	Perth	18
🌦	Prague	18
☀	Reykjavik	14
☀	Rio de J	27
☀	Rome	32
🌥	Shanghai	31
⛈	Singapore	32
🌥	Stockh'm	18
☁	Strasb'g	27
🌦	Sydney	17
☀	Tel Aviv	31
☁	Tenerife	28
🌫	Tokyo	31
☀	Toronto	27
🌥	Vancouv'r	23
🌦	Vienna	23
🌦	Warsaw	19
☀	Wash'ton	31
🌦	Well'ton	12
🌦	Zurich	27

Arsenal

Ødegaard hails instant impact of new signings

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First Test

Cox ready to embrace new berth at No 3

Page 38 →

WHOLE EARTH

Sport

Athletics

'People are attracted to that full-throttle way of speaking'

After four gold medals at the European Championships Amy Hunt says confidence is the key to her success

Sean Ingle

Long before Amy Hunt catapulted herself into the mainstream by winning an unprecedented four gold medals at the European Championships, she was remarkably upfront about her ambitions. There was no coyness. No equivocation. She wanted the quadruple in Birmingham. And having talked a good game, she delivered.

She celebrated her final golden night in Birmingham with a glass of champagne and a KFC, as well as a 2am massage to ensure her legs would be fresh for her next race in Lausanne on Friday. It meant going to bed at 4am. But despite being on four hours sleep yesterday morning, she is sharp as a tack and explains why being bold is good for her - and her sport.

"Sometimes people are a bit afraid of voicing their ambitions," Hunt says. "But life is short. Why not be ambitious? We're all thinking these things, so why not just say them out loud? People are attracted to that no-facade, full-confidence, full-throttle way of speaking. It's something we have in other sports. If you're going into a Wimbledon final, it's obviously clear that you want to win."

And, Hunt believes, it also helps her when it comes to the crunch in races too. "Especially in the sprints, you have to be so utterly confident on that start line. It's like nothing else on this planet. I'm trying to get from A to B as fast as humanly possible, and it's so simple yet complex.

"I have to be so convinced of myself, my own power, my own strength, my own speed, and my own methodology, in a sense, to be able to make that all come together as one," she adds. "Because it is such a mental game. And just having that edge of confidence of 1 or 2% matters."

Hunt is a very modern British sports star, equally comfortable talking about studying Chaucer and the Material Renaissance at Cambridge on Radio 4's Woman's Hour as she is posting a video on Instagram of her twirling with her four gold medals to the sound of Abba's Winner Takes It All.

"I had a glass of champagne and a KFC and it was amazing," she says. "It was one of the best tasting KFCs I've had in my life. Then we went and had a massage at 2am, and then I got into bed finally at 4am with a not-packed suitcase."

Advertisers talk about how the biggest stars are able to appeal to all four quadrants - young and old, men and women. And after her four European golds, Hunt is closing in on being a four-quadrant star.

She is smart but normal, exceptionally talented but down to earth. And she does the numbers too. When Hunt won her first gold over 100m last Monday, two million people watched on the BBC. On Sunday, when she completed the quadruple 4.2 million tuned in. She says her number of social media followers has doubled in a week too.

And how appropriate is it that someone who has a passion for the Renaissance has been so instrumental to the rebirth of track and field in Britain? "We've seen from these champs that the public really love track and field," Hunt says. "Athletics is coming back with a bit of swagger."

But that swagger carries a lot of self-awareness too. After she won her third gold in the women's 4x100m relay, the first thing she did was praise her teammates. Dina Asher-Smith was hailed for breaking the record for European Championships medals. Success Eduan was praised for being a midwife as well as a top sprinter. And Hunt also marvelled at how Imani-Lara Lansiquot had written an acclaimed play, Armour of Gaza, about growing up in Peckham.

'Sometimes people are afraid of voicing their ambitions. But life is short. Why not be ambitious?'

GREAT
Novuna
SPAR

▲ *Amy Hunt celebrates winning her fourth gold medal in Birmingham*
REUTERS/PETER CZIBORRA

Hunt knows she is now about to experience a whole new level of fame but there is a caveat - living in Padua, Italy, means she will escape the worst excesses of the tabloids.

"I am probably going to give Keely Hodgkinson a little text to see how she manages it, but it's definitely not something I shy away from," says Hunt. "I'm not scared of it at all. It's a privilege to be famous as a track person. But it's also quite lucky for me that I have such a secluded setup."

The difficult times in her life, including challenges with her mental health while at Cambridge and several injuries after she burst to prominence as an 18-year-old, have also given her perspective. "Failure is something you can't be afraid of," she says. "My whole persona, my whole message and ethos is just to be bold. And failure is a natural part of that."

Even this year Hunt has had to battle low blood pressure which has caused her to nearly faint. "Obviously, this year I've struggled with my health and there's been races that have felt like failures," she says. "But if you don't fail, then you don't win. It's a natural part of a sportsperson's life. It's sad, but necessary."

Hunt is currently ranked fifth in the world over 200m and eighth in the 100m.

She knows she needs to get faster to beat the Americans Gabby Thomas and Melissa Jefferson-Wooden, and the St Lucian star Julien Alfred at next year's world championships.

But as she talks with scientific precision about plans to improve her 60m speed, so she can be quicker round the bend in the 200m and be in the mix for the Olympics, you are reminded that she has a habit of manifesting medals.

Unsurprisingly, Hunt is also now the overwhelming favourite for sports personality of the year, well ahead of fellow athlete Josh Kerr, and the England footballers Harry Kane and Jude Bellingham.

"I think it just speaks to the resurgence and reignition of track and field in 2026," she says. "It's been amazing to see the public fall back in love with us, and be in people's minds and hearts."

Hunter Bell sets sights on 'Big Three' in 800m clash of titans

Sean Ingle

Georgia Hunter Bell says she is ready to take on the 'Big Three' of Audrey Werro, Keely Hodgkinson and Femke Broeders-Bol in a race for the ages over 800m in Zurich next week.

Hunter Bell has had an extraordinary season, adding the 1500m European Championship title on Sunday to her Commonwealth 800m gold and 1500m world indoor crown. She is now ready to put herself to the test in a fast-paced 800m against the three Birmingham medallists.

"There is still a lot left of the season," said Hunter Bell. "I haven't done a paced 800m yet, I have one coming up with the speedy girls. I am really excited to throw my hat into the ring there. Had a bit of fomo when I saw them on the podium. It's such an exciting time. I am really happy."

There are some who believe a fast-paced 800m in Zurich could get close to the world record of 1min 53.28sec, set in 1983 by the Czech Jarmila Kratochvilova, especially with the Swiss star Werro having run 1:53.80 this season - the third fastest in history.

Hunter Bell could certainly be in the mix given she appears to be in the form of her life. "I haven't run a personal best so far this year yet but weirdly you could say I'm having my best year because I keep on winning," she said.

Hunter Bell also revealed that she and the top trio had been talking to the world champion Lilian Odira about setting up a big five clash before the end of 2026.

"I can't wait for that, hopefully the big five will come together soon," she added. "We've been talking after the races. 'When are you racing? You should get into this one.' There's a good competitive spirit."

The most likely opportunity is the Ultimate Championships in Budapest next month, where there will be a $150,000 (£110,000) first prize on the line. "In a good way, people aren't swerving opportunities, everyone is trying to do it together," Hunter Bell said.

▲ *Georgia Hunter Bell won 1500m gold at the European Championships*

'If we want equal pay we can't be doing two-minute rounds'

The big interview
Chantelle Cameron

The Northampton fighter on Katie Taylor, Mikaela Mayer and why women's boxing needs a radical shake-up

Donald McRae

Less than two weeks before her world title unification bout against Mikaela Mayer, in a potential fight of the year for women's boxing, Chantelle Cameron's memory carries a quietly shocking force. "I was 14 and doing a psychology GCSE when my teacher spoke to me in front of the whole class," Cameron says. "I don't know why because I wasn't a naughty kid. But he just turned round and said I'm going to end up stacking shelves in Tesco with two kids by the time I'm 16. On the inside I was like: 'Wow. Did he really say that?'"

Cameron is the only woman to have beaten the great Katie Taylor as a pro and she has become a passionate advocate for elite female boxers and their right to fight three-minute rounds - so much so that, last year, she gave up her WBC world title because the sanctioning body suggested women weren't strong enough to box more than two-minute rounds. She will now defend her WBO world super-welterweight title a week on Saturday against Mayer, the experienced WBC belt-holder.

Before she addresses the hard night ahead of Mayer and herself, Cameron nods when I ask if, as a shy teenager, she felt crushed by her teacher's comment.

"I was," she says in a cafe in Walkden, near Manchester. "I went home and said: 'Mum, why would he say that to me?' It can be really damaging when you're told that by a teacher. It's like he's saying I've got no dreams, no hope. There's nothing wrong with stacking shelves, by the way, but to diminish someone like that at school is so wrong. I took it quite bad and my mum went into school and told them: 'You can't be judging people like that - just because we're from Eastern District [in Northampton].'"

Did her teacher apologise? "Never, but I ended up quitting psychology anyway."

The 35-year-old has learned much about the depths and complexities of the mind because, apart from shedding her insecurities when facing a partisan crowd in Dublin on the night she beat Taylor in a searing battle in May 2023, Cameron dealt with her own demons after losing the rematch six months later.

It still stings that, as Cameron says, "because I'm from Northampton Eastern District, you're always judged. People expect you're going to be a thief or a druggie, on benefits, and it's so unfair. I love where I'm from but when you're told that by your teachers, and people in authority, it's more real. So I never dreamed of being in the position I'm in now - because I wouldn't dare to dream. I was always told it weren't possible."

Chantelle Cameron has only been beaten once in 23 fights

Cameron has since encountered another form of prejudice. In 2023 the WBC president, Mauricio Sulaimán, defended his organisation's refusal to sanction 12 three-minute rounds in female bouts. "In tennis, women play three sets," Sulaimán argued. "In [women's] basketball the basket is shorter and the ball smaller and those are not contact sports. We stand by the safety and wellbeing of the fighters."

That statement did not acknowledge the strength and resilience of the best female fighters - while undermining Cameron, for she would benefit from longer rounds. Is the WBC's stance sexist? "Yes. I think it's bad for the sport. It's bad for women's boxing. Amateur women do three-minute rounds and for women's pro boxing to be taken seriously we should be doing the same as men. If we want equal rights, equal pay, we can't be doing 10 two-minute rounds."

Cameron's view is nuanced when we consider reasonable counter arguments. "I understand the pros and cons of two-minute rounds. It's electric and fought at full pace. But it's holding back women's boxing. I don't think it has anything to do with health. We're perfectly capable of doing three-minute rounds."

In October 2025 Cameron stood up to the WBC and, in protest, gave up her world title. "I vacated and then won the WBO belt because they allowed me to fight over three-minute rounds. Mikaela is the WBC champion now and, because this is such a good fight for me, I've had to go back to twos."

Over 12 three-minute rounds Cameron would be a prohibitive favourite against Mayer. "Mikaela knew that and so this gives her an advantage. If we went to three-minute rounds, I don't think no woman's going to stay with me. I had thought Mikaela was an advocate for three-minute rounds but she wants to go for the undisputed title and that includes the WBC."

What does Mayer do best in the ring? "She's very tough. That's her best attribute and she's got good fitness. I have a lot of respect for Mikaela as a fighter and a person. I'm taking her as seriously as I took Katie Taylor."

The mutual respect is refreshing. They are two of the best fighters in the world and Cameron says of her articulate and engaging American rival: "She's a great advocate for boxing, not just women's boxing. She comes to fight."

Cameron is less enthusiastic when reflecting on her rivalry with Taylor. She went to Dublin for Taylor's homecoming bout and Cameron is honest when describing how she felt in front of a vociferous crowd. "It was horrible. But [her trainers] Jamie Moore and Nigel Travis believed in me. I didn't think I'd beat Katie but they were adamant I'd do it."

Cameron produced a supreme performance and edged the fight. But was she concerned about the scorecards? "Oh yes. The first one was a draw. I thought: 'Oh no.' But I prepared for that because I was going into Katie Taylor's back yard, and she's the queen of Ireland. When I got the decision it was incredible."

It was different before the rematch. "God's honest truth, I did not want to be in Dublin. It was a hard ask to do it again and everything was stacked against me. Katie is an amazing fighter, but I think I'm better than her. I'm all wrong for Katie, but when everything goes against you it's really hard. It weren't me versus Katie. It was me against the whole of Ireland. On the morning of the rematch, I was in my bedroom

▼ *Chantelle Cameron will fight Mikaela Mayer with three world titles at stake*
COLIN MCPHERSON/THE GUARDIAN

crying my eyes out. That's how much I trusted my gut feeling. I was having a breakdown and Nigel came to comfort me."

She lost narrowly on points and Cameron says: "I took it really bad and I had a bit of a breakdown. My family and friends think that too. I just gave up everything. I was really sad and pushing away the people that love me most."

Cameron even left Moore's gym to try to make a fresh start. It did not take long to understand that they were the best possible team for her. She says: "The last two years I've grown into a much better and more rounded person. I've matured so much."

Has she spoken to Taylor? "No, but two weeks after I beat Katie I sent her a private message on Instagram to say it was an honour to fight her. I told her I appreciated all she has done for boxing and thanked her. It was a genuine message because, if you fight Katie, you're fighting a legend. I didn't hear back and thought: 'Fair enough.' I knew it was tough for her to lose.

"When she beat me I heard nothing. I thought then that: 'We're different people.' I don't judge her but politeness doesn't cost anything. I'm friendly with most of my opponents now. We talk and have a laugh. But me and Katie? I'm not going to pretend there's any love lost."

Cameron chased a trilogy contest but Taylor chose to fight Amanda Serrano, her other great rival, twice more. Taylor is now having a huge and probably final fight at Croke Park against the obscure Flora Pili on 5 September. Does Cameron feel she should be fighting Taylor?

"No. From the bottom of my heart, fighting me at Croke Park is not right for her swansong. It's going to be a show, and more of a send-off, than a fight. I was the wrong opponent and so that's why there was never a conversation. I think this will be her last fight. I hope it is because she has done so much for women's boxing and had so many tough fights."

Does Cameron worry about the damage she has also absorbed while compiling a 22-1 record over nine years as a pro? "Yes, I'm really concerned. That's why I do a lot of brain training. An app called Elevate exercises my brain because over the last few years I've been worried. So I'm reading books, brain training, because I don't want to be punch-drunk. I want to retire from boxing being able to put sentences together."

Has she seen warning signs? "Not yet, touch wood. I don't think I've been in many wars. I had my first proper cut with Katie but that was more of a head-butt. I've not been hurt and Jamie's very good at not over-sparring. I don't need any extra knocks on my head."

She has an annual MRI brain scan and Cameron says: "I hate the scans. I get real nervous and anxious because I'm being punched in my head for a living and I don't know what's going on up there. But I also have security knowing I'm going for them scans. If the smallest thing shows on the scan I'd say: "My time's up. Health is way more important than boxing."

It has been hard for Cameron to find a decent opponent since Taylor. She is candid when stressing she "needs" the challenge of Mayer to lift her while, at the same time, she wants to retire in the next two years: "I want to go out healthy and with my brain intact."

Our conversation drifts back to her beloved Northampton. "My mum and dad are still there," Cameron says. "I would love to buy them a nice cottage in the countryside but they want to stay. That's the kind of family we are. I still have the same friends, and I'm so proud of them. They're also proud of me. I'll always represent Northampton and Eastern District because I'm the one that made it. It shows other people you can still make it, no matter where you're from. Don't let anyone tell you any different."

> *'I hate the scans. I'm punched in my head for a living and I don't know what's going on up there'*

Elite sport must adapt to survive heatwaves

How climate crisis is affecting athletes and what steps are being taken to protect them from rising temperatures

Tanya Aldred

The mercury-shattering European summer pants alongside us on the back straight, looming as we hug the shadows, sweaty sandals on the parched earth. Across Asia, Africa and North America, inhabitants have endured the warmest July of their lives.

In Toronto, Alex Hutchinson, author of the bestseller Endure: Mind, Body, and the Curiously Elastic Limits of Human Performance, has just come back from an early run. "Here I am in Canada, a famously frosty country, and my general take when I wrote 'Endure' in the 2010s was that heat was not that big a deal. Occasionally, people died of heat, often in the deep south of the US, often returning to football practice in August, when they were not prepared, but that was rare.

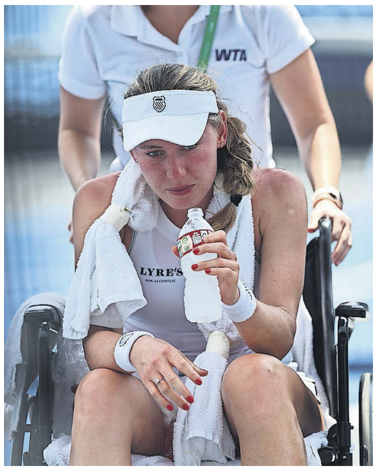
"Now I'm a lot more cautious. My general thesis is that the brain is pretty good at protecting you. Even if you try to deliberately run yourself to collapse, you won't be able to. You'll get tired before that happens. But heat is one of the very few things that can trick the brain's protective circuitry."

This summer has felt like a sea change in elite sport. Somehow we have reached a stage where it is no longer shocking to see a tennis player collapse on court, like Ekaterina Alexandrova in Memphis or Jakub Mensik in Paris. Cyclist Tom Pidcock called the Tour de France a "war zone" and much-mocked referee Ilgiz Tantashev, who officiated France's chaotic last-16 win over Paraguay, was found to be suffering from heat strain. On 7 August, the Fijian rugby player Saimoni Vunilagi died of suspected heatstroke in the Japanese city of Fukuoka, where temperatures had hit 35C, after training with his club, Kyuden Voltex.

Dr Lee Taylor, from Loughborough University, is one of the world leaders in preparing elite athletes for extreme environments, "The reality is that we live in a climate-change world," he says.

"It's inevitable, whatever sport you play, at whatever level, that more of that training and playing is going to be in a hot environment. So either we stop playing sport altogether or we adapt."

Logistics, timings, player preparation, shading, cooling, all can be tweaked, and we saw some of those adaptations in the World Cup - scatter-gun style. There were mandated hydration breaks, but nothing extra for games with a wet bulb globe temperature [a measure of heat stress on the human body] of more than 32C. There was no flexibility to extend the length of half-time - except for the Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Madonna show in the final - despite there being, in Taylor's words, "a clear rationale to do so in some games as a very robust way to make the players safe by reducing their body temperature". The dollar held the upper hand. One of the challenges in preparing players for the World Cup was the limited number of days for acclimatisation.



▲ *Ekaterina Alexandrova collapsed on court during the Memphis Classic*

But given adequate preparation time, experts like Taylor can see the heat as a performance opportunity for elite athletes. "If you look at the [2019] Doha World Athletics Championships, for example, up to 40% in the road races did not finish because they weren't prepared properly, so just by being prepared appropriately you've beaten nearly half the field. What I worry about is athletes who have undeclared sickness, a prior viral load or diarrhoea, or are perhaps on some undeclared medications - that can be quite a dangerous combination to exercise in the heat. Or if an event isn't well prepared with something we call a 'heat deck' - appropriate medical expertise and facilities to rapidly cool someone with a potentially fatal exertional heat stroke - where aggressive whole body cooling is the gold standard to protect health and potentially life."

Autumn is approaching in the northern hemisphere and with it the Premier League, which kicks off on Friday. Taylor thinks the unseasonable heat could have brought pre-season advantages. "If someone has engaged in about six weeks of heat training, they can expand their haemoglobin mass by approximately 3%-6%. That's the same type of adaptation we get in those red blood cells at an altitude camp - super desirable for our elite athletes. So clubs will be regarding the weather in some parts as a performance opportunity. Most were probably looking to expose their players to the heat to gain some of those adaptations."

But there is an existential problem for all of us .“We used to prepare for the worst possible outcome," says Taylor. "What does the historical data tell us is going to be the most challenging humidity and heat? But that's gone out the window over the last five years because we have these crazy outliers." And when the data doctor says the data can't help, you know you're in trouble.

This is an extract from our newsletter, The Hotspot.

Results

Football

SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

Cardiff (L) **L** **Wrexham** (L) **L**

LA LIGA

Deportivo La Coruña L Elche L

COPPA ITALIA

First round: Cremonese L Sampdoria L; Palermo L Lecce L; Pisa 1 Empoli 1 (Pisa win 4-3 on penalties); Sassuolo 3 Cesena 0

Cricket

FIRST MEN'S TEST MATCH (day three of five)

Galle India 462 (D Padikkal 167, KL Rahul 82, DC Jurel 51; NGRP Jayasuriya 4-109). Sri Lanka 284 (GS Dinusha 100, DPNN Dickwella 80; MJ Suthar 4-76). India lead Sri Lanka by 178 runs.

WORLD CUP CHALLENGE LEAGUE GROUP B

Dar-es-Salaam Singapore 103 (Abhishek Kumar 5-15). Tanzania 106-1 (DA Mehta 48no). Tanzania win by nine wickets.

Dar-es-Salaam Hong Kong 174 (Zeeshan Ali 57, Shahid Wasif 50). Italy 175-4 (M Campopiano 74no, BAD Manenti 50). Italy win by six wickets.

Tennis

ATP/WTA CINCINNATI OPEN (Ohio, USA)

Men: Second round: J Faria (Por) bt B Shelton (US) 6-4 6-4; **F Tiafoe** (US) bt L Sonego (It) 6-3 6-4; **F Cobolli** (It) bt A Blockx (Bel) 7-5 4-6 7-5; **T Tirante** (Arg) bt M Landaluce (Sp) 7-6 (7-5) 7-6 (7-4)

Women: Second round: C Gauff (US) bt L Samsonova (Rus) 2-6 6-4 6-1; **E Svitolina** (Ukr) bt T Valentova (Cz) 3-6 7-6 (7-5) 6-0; **D Parry** (Fr) bt L Boisson (Fr) 4-6 6-4 6-3; **I Swiatek** (Pol) bt M Sakkari (Gre) 4-6 6-1 6-1

Hockey

MEN'S WORLD CUP (Belgium/Netherlands)

Group D India 2 England 4; Pakistan 3 Wales 3
Group B France 3 Malaysia 3; Germany L Belgium L

Greg Wood's racing tips

Chepstow **2.15** Hope Rising **2.45** Soeur De Flash **3.15** Grove Street **3.50** Risen Again **4.25** Espona Bay **5.00** Arnaz

Lingfield **2.30** Circuit Breaker **3.00** Romotoso **3.33** Pride Eye **4.08** My Old Mate **4.45** Zaltalla **5.20** Megaphone **5.52** Happier **6.22** Von Krolock (nb)

Wolverhampton **5.30** Saifo **6.00** Javelot **6.30** Percy's Lad (nap) **7.00** Sunshine And Roses **7.30** Arishka's Dream **8.00** Dance Time

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP (Belgium/Netherlands)

Group A Chile 0 Japan 3; Australia 2 Netherlands 4
Group B USA 3 Scotland 2; Germany 2 Argentina 3

Volleyball

WOMEN'S UNDER-17 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP (Chile)

Final USA 3 Turkey 0

Fixtures

Football (7.45pm unless stated)

Champions League

Playoffs: First leg Dinamo Zagreb v Viking (8pm); Fenerbahce v Lyon (8pm); Levski Sofia v AEK Athens (8pm)

Vertu EFL Trophy

Barnet v Arsenal U21; Leyton Orient v AFC Wimbledon (7pm); Northampton v Brighton U21 (7pm); Reading v Wycombe (7pm); Stockport v Everton U21 (7pm); Wigan v Aston Villa U21 (7pm)

Enterprise National League North

Bedford v Buxton; Brackley v King's Lynn *Dazn*; Darlington v Chester; Hebburn v Worksop; Hednesford v Southport; Hereford v Radcliffe; Marine v Chorley; Merthyr v Telford; Morecambe v South Shields *Dazn*; Oxford City v Harborough; Scarborough v Spennymoor; Spalding v Macclesfield

Enterprise National League South

Dover v Tonbridge; Hemel Hempstead v Maidenhead; Horsham v Hampton & Richmond; Maidstone v Folkestone Invicta; Slough v Farnham; Torquay v Weston-S-Mare *Dazn*; Totton v Dorking; Walton & Hersham v Dagenham & Redbridge *Dazn*

Rugby league

Betfred Super League

Hull KR v Warrington (8pm)

Ødegaard hails 'brilliant' Tzolis and Guimarães after fast starts

Ed Aarons

Martin Ødegaard has praised the instant impact made by new signings Bruno Guimarães and Christos Tzolis in Arsenal's Community Shield victory over Manchester City on Sunday and believes the Premier League champions can compete for multiple trophies this season.

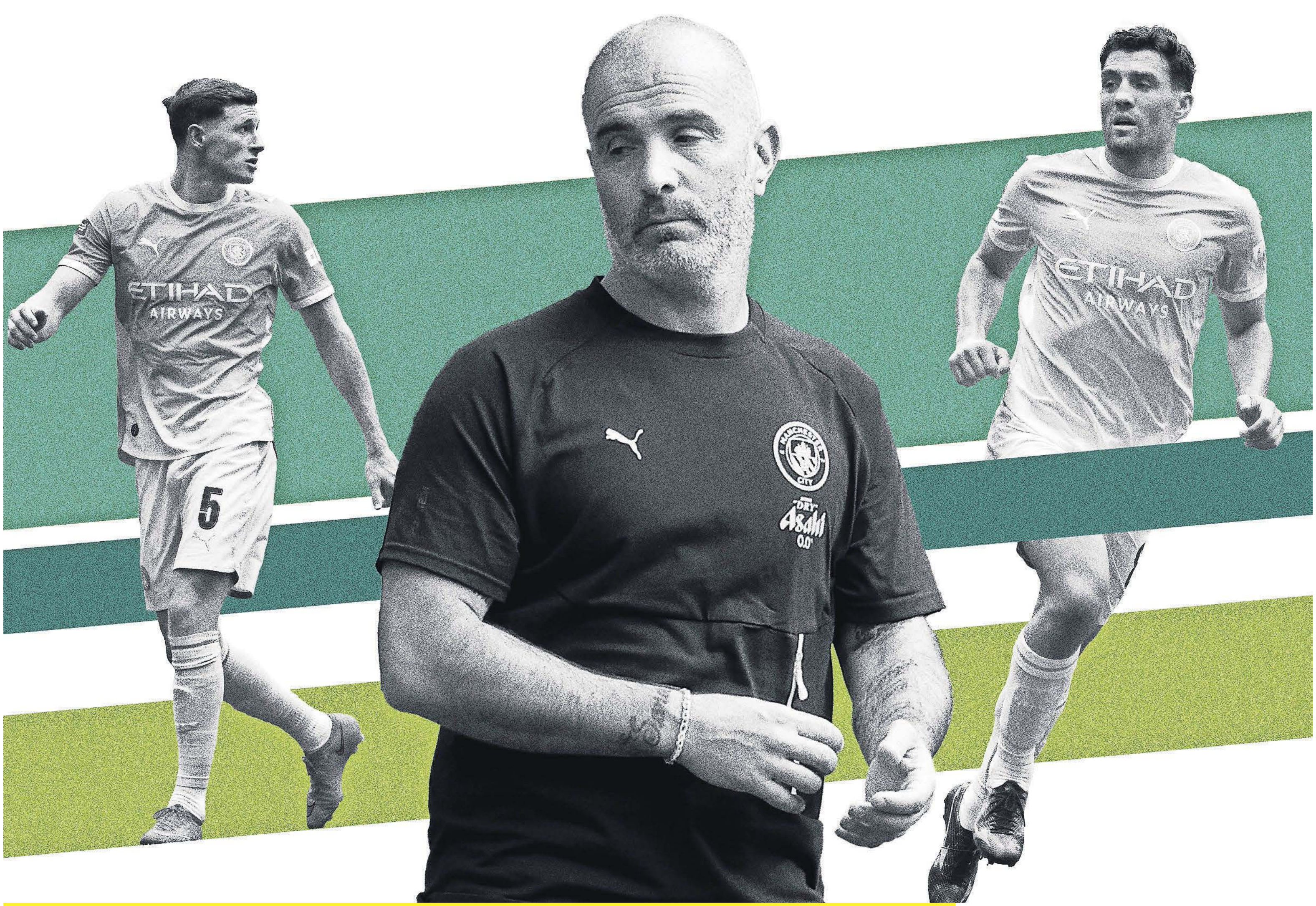
Arsenal were hugely impressive as they blew away last season's FA Cup winners in Cardiff, racing into a 3-0 lead after only 48 minutes. Tzolis - a £34m signing from Club Brugge - set up Kai Havertz for the second goal before adding another assist for Ødegaard to make it 3-0. Guimarães was replaced at the break by Declan Rice having put in a commanding performance on his first start since joining from Newcastle for £75m and Ødegaard said the Brazil midfielder has fitted in seamlessly.

"Since the first day he came in, it has been such a natural thing," said the Norwegian. "Although we had some big fights with him in the past, he has just come in as a real natural part of the team. And you can see his quality. He can win the ball, he's a fighter, but he also has so much quality. He is so calm on the ball. He always takes the right amount of time and he finds the pass. It's brilliant. Christos, as well, it is good to have new players perform like that already."

Ødegaard started 16 Premier League games last season due to a variety of injuries and scored only one goal. But after finding his form as Norway reached the quarter-finals of the World Cup in the summer, the 27-year-old said he is determined to make more of an impact at club level. "Last season, to miss so many games because of injury was really frustrating," Ødegaard said. "What I have just worked on is to use that as motivation for this year and to become stronger. And to use all of those experiences in a positive way. Obviously, I want to help the team score more goals, get more assists, and all that."

Arsenal begin their title defence against promoted Coventry on Friday night and Ødegaard expects his side to lay down a marker. "We wanted to show our level," he said of the win over City. "Of course, last year we won the league. But we want more. We want to do it again in the league and then there are the other trophies. There is a lot to work for and still a lot of room for improvement."

▲ *Arsenal captain Martin Ødegaard picked up another trophy on Sunday*



GUARDIAN PICTURE DESK

City's midfield muddle gives Maresca his first headache

Community Shield failings and Rodri's impending exit show scale of task facing Guardiola's replacement

Jonathan Wilson

There are caveats. It was only the Community Shield - and no side has gone on to win the league after lifting the Community Shield since 2018. It was against the league champions, whose pre-season has involved far less strenuous travel than their own. By the time the season really gets going, there will be greater clarity in central midfield, with Rodri set to complete his move to Barcelona imminently. But this was a startlingly bad opening for Enzo Maresca at Manchester City.

Succeeding a manager of Pep Guardiola's stature is never easy, as numerous clubs have found. But it's not just Guardiola's standing, the sense that whoever follows him is in his shadow. It's that his style of play is so idiosyncratic that the transition process inevitably becomes more difficult. Even though Maresca was Guardiola's assistant at City in 2022-23, and his football is Guardiola-inspired, it is not identical, not least because Guardiola was always evolving. Even allowing for all that, though, it was remarkable how poorly City defended in their 3-0 defeat by Arsenal on Sunday.

Arsenal played well. There was a sharpness to them and a slickness to their passing that wasn't always present last season. Fears that they may have lost their appetite having ended their 22-year wait for the title may have been overstated (although much, much tougher tests await). But City were a rabble, limited going forward and a shambles at the back.

It was the second goal that will really have worried them, because Arsenal had to do so little to score. Martin Ødegaard was given time to measure his cross. Christos Tzolis wandered off the back of Abdukodir Khusanov. Then Kai Havertz, slightly more explicably, pulled away from Rúben Dias. In Khusanov's defence, it probably should be acknowledged that he does not usually play at right-back, but he has occupied the role before. A wide player drifting off your back should not come as a shock; perhaps it's just pre-season and he was not as alert as he will be, but it was a baffling error. But it was of a piece with the wider whole; throughout, City seemed off the pace, not as focused as Arsenal. Even if that improves as the season goes on, it's a problem if City have title aspirations; how far clear will Arsenal be by the time City finally click - if they do click?

But there were structural issues on that flank as well. Antoine Semenyo was barely involved. Elliot Anderson, on the right of the midfield two, was unable to check the forward surges of Riccardo Calafiori, who scored the first and whose run played a key role in the third. An attacking left-back, even one with as much freedom to drift infield as the Italian enjoys, shouldn't cause that much trouble.

The midfield issue desperately needs resolving. Rodri was an unused substitute as talks about his likely move to Barcelona go on (City accepted a bid for him on Sunday night). It's not just his quality that will be missed; his organisational abilities will be too. Enzo Fernández, who worked with Maresca at Chelsea, seemed to have been lined up as a replacement for Rodri but City did not submit a bid before the Friday 5pm deadline Chelsea had placed for selling the midfielder. Mateo Kovacic spent much of last season deputising for Rodri but he is 32 now; he is not the future. Factor in the loss of Bernardo Silva as well, and there is a serious shortfall in midfield.

How far clear will Arsenal be in the title race by the time City finally click - if they do click?

Generally, in fact, City's squad looks a little short. Dias and Marc Guéhi are the only defenders over 25. There are plenty of attacking midfielders but Omar Marmoush has never really convinced as a back-up to Erling Haaland. The £200m spree in January 2025 may have helped stop the rot, but the players who came in then - not just Marmoush and Khusanov but also Vitor Reis and Nico González - would not be badly missed now. City, once so focused in their spending, have started to make mistakes. Tijjani Reijnders, brought in last summer for £50m, is about to be shipped on. Rayan Aït-Nouri was a baffling signing.

Maresca must have looked at Arsenal's squad, the extraordinary options available to Mikel Arteta in midfield, and despaired. Put generously, his is a squad in transition, although it's starting to look as though it may be a squad in decline. The sense over the past couple of years was of Guardiola, slowly, passing his peak, but in retrospect perhaps it was only his genius that kept an ailing City competitive.

The evidence of Sunday, with all due caveats about the stage of the season, is that this may be a very bad time for Maresca to have replaced Guardiola. Taking over from a legend would be extremely challenging in the best of circumstances, and these are starting to look like they may be very bad circumstances.

Juventus agree loan for Tottenham's Vicario

Ed Aarons

Juventus have agreed a deal with Tottenham for Guglielmo Vicario to join on an initial loan after the Italian side decided against a move for Aston Villa's Emiliano Martínez.

Vicario is set to leave Spurs having lost his place as Roberto De Zerbi's No 1 to Antonin Kinsky, with the agreement with Juventus containing an option to make the Italy goalkeeper's move permanent next year for £8.6m.

Martínez had been linked with the Turin club after Villa agreed a deal to sign Parma's Zion Suzuki for around £30m but Juventus had a €10m offer rejected over the weekend and decided to switch their attention elsewhere. The Argentina goalkeeper is currently sidelined due to a finger injury.

Vicario moved to north London in 2023 for £17.2m and has made almost 120 appearances since then. With De Zerbi having also brought in Martin Dubravka on a free transfer as cover for Kinsky, the 29-year-old will become the latest player to leave Spurs this summer after Cristian Romero, Djed Spence, Will Lankshear and Yves Bissouma. Pape Matar Sarr is also wanted by Everton and Nottingham Forest. The Senegal midfielder is valued at £30m.

▲ *Guglielmo Vicario lost his place at Tottenham to Antonin Kinsky*

Spurs have already spent more than £200m on six new players in this transfer window and are keen on signing Savinho from Manchester City. The Brazil forward was not part of Enzo Maresca's squad for the Community Shield defeat by Arsenal in Cardiff and is thought to be open to the move. Spurs have also been heavily linked with a move for Liverpool's Cody Gakpo as De Zerbi seeks to strengthen his attack.

Taiwo Awoniyi has moved to Coventry from Nottingham Forest in a £9m deal, in time for the newly promoted club's opening game of the Premier League season against Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium on Friday.

'Losing his father was a rucksack of pain' for Mourinho

Director of Netflix series lifts lid on his attempts to get manager to open up on the emotional baggage he carries

Daniel Harris

Even in the hyperreal world of football, there are few characters more compelling, more polarising, or more everything than José Mourinho, the best and worst of public him on full display in a new three-part Netflix series. "It reminded me how good he was," says Joe Pearlman, who directed Mourinho, and the actual Mourinho is, believe it or not, keen to communicate the same. As he puts it in the show: "I look, you look, I see more than you."

Making documentaries, though, is often about taking people to the places they're most skilled at avoiding. "I knew the interviews were going to be very intense," says Pearlman, "and he was going to try and control the narrative and manipulate us. Everything bad is everyone else's fault and everything he's done is validated by winning. Because that's all that's important."

This is just one aspect of an unusual worldview. "There's a moment in episode three where I ask him about his childhood," says Pearlman, "and he doesn't want to talk about it because he doesn't think it's relevant to who he is, essentially saying he's not interested in people. Which, for one of the greatest man-managers of all time, is quite odd."

The son of a much-loved coach, Mourinho felt like an outsider from childhood because he was known by way of his dad. Then, when he became a coach himself, having not been a player, that appeared to confer insider privilege. Indisputably, this self-image has helped Mourinho self-actualise, surviving unlimited wealth at Chelsea and a spell at Real Madrid, with the attitude of "someone who's had a chip on their shoulder" - along, of course, with his charisma and tactical acumen.

Félix Mourinho died in June 2017 and, when that comes up in the documentary, there are tears. "He's obviously buried the loss of his father," Pearlman says. "It's very painful for him. As someone who's lost a parent, I can talk about my mum very openly. I don't think José's ever tried to understand what any part of his life means. He's always looking forward.

"Losing his father changed him; it tainted the years that came afterwards. And on top of that, José carries every word, every goal, every decision that doesn't go his way; it's a rucksack of pain he's been lugging around since he was probably 19, 20 years old."

Nevertheless, everything that makes Mourinho special - the wit, the insight, the confidence, the zest, the charm, the genius, the cool - burns through the screen. "He was looking for an outlet to be the biggest possible version of himself," says Pearlman. "The ego and the charisma on top of the talent meant he could embody a character he'd always dreamt of being and that is the person that we've come to know as José Mourinho."

The documentary is the 'portrait of a hero and a villain' says director

That person is, of course, only one version of reality, a character honed for the purpose of footballing warfare. One who, it seems, sees football as distinct from the real world, with combatants permitted to do anything in the pursuit of victory; he is no more apologetic for his Anders Frisk and Eva Carneiro excesses now than at the time. Yet Mourinho also articulates his desire to be loved, though you sometimes wonder if, to him, that has as much in common with adulation as affection. "It can also be: 'I want to have a lot of attention on me'," says Pearlman, "and conflict brings that in spades. It's like this safety blanket that allows him to feel like he's doing things for a righteous cause."

At home Mourinho is different: more reserved, quieter. And it is with regard to his home life that we experience the show's other sad moment: Mourinho explaining he's been away from his family a lot, so much so that it's easier for them when he's not around. "I'm like: 'Oh my god, what does it even feel like saying that?'" says Pearlman.

What does Pearlman think the show is about? "A lot of it is about winning at all costs," he replies, "and what happens when you're defined by winning. It's also the portrait of a hero and a villain, one of the great leaders of men. As a civilisation, we're lucky Mourinho didn't go into politics!"

And, of course, the show now has a surprise happy ending, with Mourinho's return to Madrid. "The person I've seen over the last few years at Roma, Benfica … until this last one, I don't think I could say that I've met a happy man or a content person," says Pearlman. "He is now where he believes he should always have been … And one thing we all know is that whatever comes next, it's going to be a box-office blockbuster."

……

Mourinho is on Netflix

'A perfect place for me to be challenged'

Emilie Joramo has always been keen on the WSL, now Brighton's new midfielder is ready to make an impact

Suzanne Wrack

Emilie Joramo has long had her sights set on the Women's Super League, but she held herself back from pushing for a move over from Scandinavia - until now.

"I'd been interested in the league for a long time now and it was a goal for me to get here one day," says Joramo, who Brighton signed on a free transfer at the end of June. "It was about finding the right path for me to get here. I didn't want to go too early, I wanted to feel ready for it both physically and mentally. Now, everything just felt right."

Brighton had been tracking the Norwegian midfielder for some time and the 24-year-old was aware of their interest. An encouraging conversation with Brighton's manager, Dario Vidosic, and good meetings with the club as her contract with Hammarby drew closer to its end meant she was at last ready to join the league she had followed from afar.

That Brighton had been aware of her for some time was a boost too. "It's reassuring for me that they really wanted me," she says. "They hadn't just watched a couple games, they'd been following me for years, and that's really important to me because I'm not going to jump at the first opportunity I get. I like to think things through and it has to feel right for me."

For Brighton fans wondering what they are getting, there should be some excitement too. Joramo is fiercely motivated and feels she fits the possession-based style of football that Vidosic wants his team to play.

"I would say that I'm a hardworking player. I always give 100% all of the time. I can't do 50, 60, 70, I'm always 100%. I want to have the ball. I want to play, not just put balls in behind but to keep the ball , play with each other, [build] good relationships with the other players and think several steps ahead. They've always been things that I'm good at and I'm always wanting to get better at too."

Brighton and the WSL present a step up. "I think I can get challenged a lot here because things go much faster, the intensity is higher, you have a smaller amount of time when you have the ball," she says. "So, it's a perfect place for me to be challenged further and develop my strengths but also the parts that I'm not as strong at and need to develop."

Arriving and starting life on the south coast was "a bit overwhelming" at first: "There's so many people to get to know, the staff is so much bigger than what I've been used to. Instead of one physio you have five and you need to get to know everyone and which person does which role. That's always the way it is in a new team but it's much bigger here."

Everyone has been very welcoming and her first impressions of training sessions under Vidosic have been positive. "I've only had two sessions with him so far," she says, "but he seems very, very good at football tactics, how the game works, how to play good football, and that was important for me because I'm a player that wants to have the ball and always wants to try to get better and play good football together as a team, not only as individuals. This is what Dario wants, so it really fits my ambitions, my values and how I want to play."

She is finding her feet on the pitch, and starting to find them off it. Joramo's girlfriend has moved to England with her, which has helped the transition and helps her escape football when needed. "I have to have other things to do besides football," she says. "We've been to the beach and have been exploring the city. It's so different for me to live by the beach, I'm from the mountains and the woods. This is like a holiday for me, and with the weather as well, it's been so warm. It's really nice."

The goal now is "to contribute as much as I can to this team and play as much as I can", but Joramo's patience as she worked towards her WSL goal should continue to serve her well. "I have to give it some time to get into it, get into the intensity and everything around the game here, because it's so much more than what I'm used to in Sweden, this is so much bigger."

At the end of her first season in England is a big carrot, should Norway come through a two-legged playoff against Romania and then another against Albania or Wales and qualify for the 2027 Women's World Cup.

Joramo made her debut for the senior side in 2022 and has been on the fringes of the squad since. In April she was on the bench for the senior side's back-to-back qualification wins over Slovenia and she is hopeful her WSL move helps her show what she can bring.

"Hopefully this also will strengthen my opportunities with the national team," she says. "I know this is the best league in the world, so if I get to play here, then I've done something right, I think."

& HOVE ALBION
AMERICAN EXPRESS
▲ *Emilie Joramo joined Brighton from Hammarby at the end of June*

Time for brilliant but bewildering Brook to come of age post-Bazball

Spared the Test captaincy for now the Yorkshireman needs to show in Pakistan series he has learned from his mistakes

Ali Martin

You have to hand it to Bazball. Even when seemingly killed off, and the England team it left behind is thousands of miles away, preparing for a series against Pakistan, it has still managed to muscle its way into the fallout from Bangladesh's seismic victory over Australia in Darwin. Talk about main character energy.

By definition, that nine-wicket victory for Bangladesh was no fluke. Najmul Hossain Shanto's men didn't jag a tight one but rather dominated their hosts over four days. And in doing so, they also managed to unite Ashes rivals by demonstrating what a golden opportunity England blew against Australia's greybeards last winter.

To say as much back then was to risk being called as deluded as the team itself; to be an enabler of the hubris that underpinned England's gung-ho approach. Stuart Broad, for example, was widely lampooned for saying that Australia, though an excellent side, were ageing and as vulnerable as they had been for a long time.

But plenty of Australian voices are now making the same point, either directly or by implication. A common refrain has been that, had England batted "sensibly" - ie with the same gimlet-eyed application of Bangladesh in a match-defining 400-plus total amassed over 138 overs - that sorry 4-1 defeat could have been very different.

While England's bowling has been forgotten here - Bangladesh opted against feeding Travis Head's cut shot like it was a goose being fattened for foie gras - thoughts certainly do go back to the defining collapses in Perth and Brisbane, when a string of batters hardwired to attack ignored the risk that seemed so obvious.

Among them was Harry Brook, whose most recent act in the whites of England was to go down swinging against New Zealand and trigger another wave of chuntering about there being more brains in a pork pie. Brook was following team orders but all people saw was 21 off nine balls and yet another example of Harry-kiri.

In a parallel universe Brook is about to captain England's Test team for the first time at his home ground of Headingley this week. Instead, England have turned back to Joe Root as the successor to Ben Stokes, with Rob Key saying the vacancy had come "too soon" for Brook and hinting that greater maturity was needed.

Perhaps it was too great an ask for Brook to lead across all three formats, or too messy to hive off the T20 captaincy to another player under split coaches. Of course the unsaid bit here is that nightclub incident in Wellington last November - the spark for the chain reaction that ultimately created the vacancy.

Although beyond learning that knocking back hazy pale ales the night before captaining in a one-day international is probably a bad idea, how much does Brook actually need to change his approach?

Clearly driving on the up in unfamiliar Perth was not smart from Brook, likewise trying to larrup Mitchell Starc under lights in his first pink-ball Test. Overall his Ashes was disappointing and a year has passed since his last Test century - a period in which wicketkeepers Alex Carey and Tom Blundell standing up to the quicks has caused him issues.

But as much as the removal of Brendon McCullum as England's Test head coach after the 2-1 defeat by New Zealand signals a desire for the pendulum to swing back a touch overall, Brook feels the very least of their problems right now. The fact is, for all that his dismissals can be triggering in the moment, Brook has already put up the kind of numbers that mark him out as a truly remarkable talent. After 38 Tests he averages 53, has scored 10 centuries (including a triple in Multan), and he sits second in the Test batting rankings behind Head.

As per the good people at CricViz, Brook has achieved this by trying to smack 44% of deliveries to or over the boundary - a figure only Head can match. More broadly, the 27-year-old looks to score off 65% of balls he faces, and defend or leave 35%. The average split for top-seven batters since his debut in 2022 has been 52/48.

The lazy assumption is that this has been achieved on flat pitches.

Overall his Ashes was disappointing and a year has passed since his last Test century

Cox enjoys Test 'clarity' after landing unfamiliar No 3 role

Taha Hashim
Headingley

It has been a complicated start to Jordan Cox's England career. There have been a handful of white-ball appearances and a Test debut that was taken away from him two years ago when he broke a thumb in the buildup. The cap eventually arrived this summer, though only at No 7 as a specialist batter, filling in when Ben Stokes was suspended against New Zealand at the Oval.

Now comes another unfamiliar role, starting tomorrow in the three-match series against Pakistan - but Cox is grateful for the straightforward message provided by the England selector Marcus North. He will bat at first drop in the first two Tests in the absence of the injured Jacob Bethell. "Northy didn't have to go: 'You're batting at three in these two Test matches', but he did. This is 100% - unless I get injured," Cox said. "Clarity's one of the best things in sport."

Cox has been told by North to "do what you've been doing, don't change the way you've been playing in county cricket, go have fun and embrace the challenge". He added: "I don't think I've ever batted three before but I've opened for probably two years in county cricket for Kent. So look, it will be fun, I'm looking forward to it."

He can probably be forgiven for forgetting his only first-class match at No 3, back in 2019 as an 18-year-old against Nottinghamshire, when he was dismissed twice by Ravichandran Ashwin.

Cox has sparkled for Essex as a thumping presence at No 4, from where he struck a 201-ball 204 against Leicestershire in June.

The challenge for the right-hander is significant, particularly if he's called upon early to take on a new-ball master in Mohammad Abbas. He has at least had the past few days off to prepare after his Hundred campaign at Welsh Fire ended with a group-stage exit.

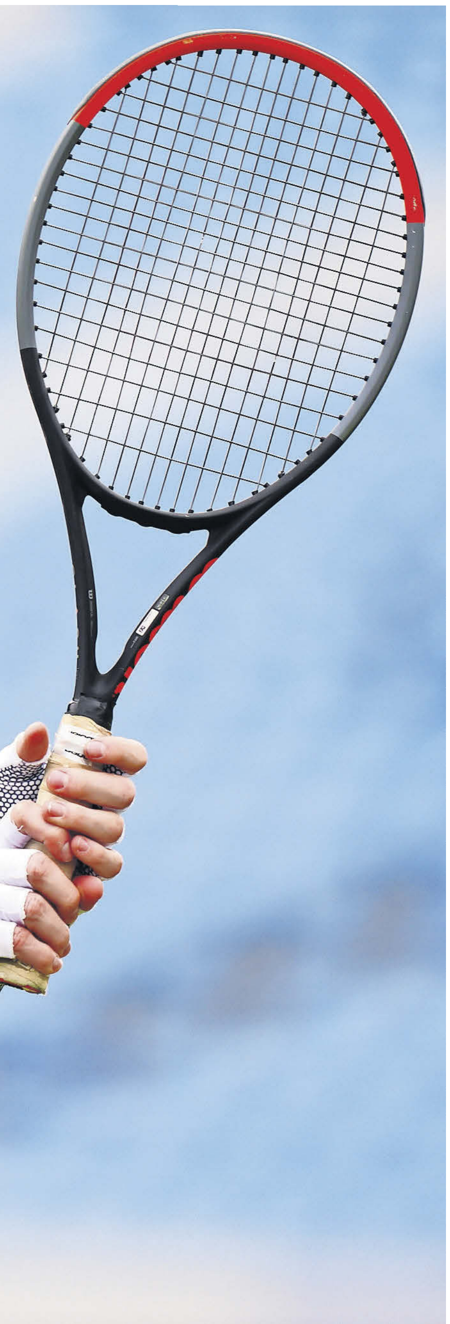
Jordan Cox will deputise for the injured Jacob Bethell

Josh Tongue and Gus Atkinson - winners in Sunday's final between Trent Rockets and Manchester Super Giants - were absent from England's rain-interrupted training session yesterday at Headingley. They will feature in today's practice, with a 16-man squad stacked with seam options if the pair have any issues.

Brydon Carse, who played for Sunrisers Leeds in Friday's eliminator at the Oval, was among those bowling as he aims to play his first Test since the Ashes.

Pakistan, meanwhile, are still to make a call on whether Babar Azam, their captain and star batter, will be fit

▼ *Harry Brook looks at home at Headingley, the venue for tomorrow's Test*
BRADLEY COLLYER/PA



But while true Brook is lethal in these conditions – Pakistan know better than anyone, victims of four Brook centuries on home soil, including that career-best 317 – like Head, he can come into his own when the ball is doing plenty for the bowlers.

His century in Wellington in late 2024 is a prime example, compiled from just 91 balls, and on an opening day when 15 wickets tumbled. A personal view is that he should have been player of the match in Melbourne last winter, with his 41 on the opening day of that crapshoot absolutely central to the end result.

Naturally people still want more. Stokes even took Brook aside at the end of that Ashes series and told him he should be averaging "65, even 70" in Test cricket. The diagnosis here was that Brook, like a lot of modern players, has an armoury of shots but is still learning when and where to deploy them.

For AB de Villiers, whose remarkable hand-eye ability was comparable to Brook, it similarly comes down to risk assessment; being able to spot when the odds are against him and, whether it is five deliveries or an hour, holding firm until it flips in his favour. "Definitely don't lose the aggressive nature of your batting or the creative side," De Villiers told For The Love of Cricket. "Just earn the right."

As per a recent chat with BBC Sport, Brook acknowledges this and gets as frustrated as the next person at some of his dismissals. But his stated aim is still to be a matchwinner for England first and foremost. "I have the ability to hit it everywhere, I just have to figure it out quicker in games," he said.

Some supporters may recoil at this but really they should be encouraged. As much as the excesses of Bazball squandered a golden chance in Australia, overall it allowed the freakishly gifted Brook to discover the limits of what is possible. Avoid an over-correction and this tricky last year could yet be the making of him.

Brook by numbers

53

Harry Brook's ***batting average*** *after 38 Tests, which has taken him to No 2 in the world rankings*

44%

Share of deliveries faced that Brook has tried to ***hit to or over the boundary*** *in his Test career*

4

Test centuries Brook has ***scored against Pakistan****, including a career-best 317 in Multan in 2024*

Dean back in charge

Charlie Dean will captain England in next month's three one-day internationals against Ireland in the absence of Nat Sciver-Brunt. Dean stood in for Sciver-Brunt during the white-ball series against New Zealand and India this summer then again when the all-rounder was injured during the group stage of the T20 World Cup. Sciver-Brunt is continuing to manage her fitness and recovery, as is Danni Wyatt-Hodge, so they will miss the Ireland series.

England squad to face Ireland C Dean (captain), M Bouchier, A Capsey, K Chathli, T Corteen-Coleman, S Dunkley, L Filer, D Gibson, J Grewcock, F Kemp, R MacDonald-Gay, C Pavely, G Potts, M Villiers, I Wong.

to play the first Test. Babar suffered a blow to his right hand while batting in a warm-up fixture last week at Beckenham, forcing him to retire hurt.

Abbas said a decision on Babar's participation will be taken on the day of the match. "Hopefully he will be fine," said Abbas. "The medical team is looking at him. He played some balls [at training], a few throw-downs."

The Pakistan seamer sounded more hopeful about the prospect of Shan Masood featuring. Their former captain broke a finger in the first Test against West Indies last month and offers valuable experience in these conditions, having scored a ton on Pakistan's last Test tour of England six years ago and made County Championship hundreds for Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire.

Analysis
Geoff Lemon

Bangladesh must be brought in to the fold after producing cricket's most unlikely upset in Australia

Sport coverage is powered by hyperbole and recency bias, but the following statement is justifiable: Bangladesh's defeat of Australia in Darwin is the most profound upset, the greatest revolt against the pre-game odds, in international cricket history. Australia's win in England in 1882 so shocked locals that they published a cremation-themed obituary, but the same result had already happened four times on the other side of the world. Zimbabwe stunned India in 1998, but that was at least in the underdogs' home conditions.

India's bench-depth win at the Gabba in 2021 has a claim, or the new nation of Pakistan winning either in India in 1952 or England in 1954. But in truth, Sunday's result is now the title holder, not just because of the disparity between the resources and histories of the two teams, not just because of the location, but because of the manufactured rarity of this match-up even taking place. Since Bangladesh's admission to the Test ranks in 2000, Cricket Australia has treated a cricket populace of well over 100 million people with the most blatant condescension.

Six Tests before this series, and only two of those in Australia, in 26 years. A cancelled Test visit in 2015 on spurious security grounds, another during the pandemic that was unavoidable but was never rescheduled, and between those a rescinded invitation to tour Australia in 2018, CA forgoing excuses and admitting they just didn't want to pay the hosting bill. Meanwhile, white-ball meetings have largely been confined to those unavoidable at World Cups: the bilateral count is 15 matches in one-day cricket and eight in T20s, less than one per year on average.

Teams do not simply walk into Australia and win Test matches. Teams from Asia particularly. Sri Lanka, winner of two World Cups, have never done it. Pakistan haven't in the last 31 years, and all up have four wins from 40 attempts. India found a repeatable method in the last eight years, but won five in 46 matches before that.

In this context, take the most junior of the principal four Asian nations, a country that has nine away Test wins in its entire history. Take a group of players who have – three survivors from the 2015 World Cup squad aside – never faced or bowled an international delivery in Australia. Put that team in a warm-up match against a CA emerging talent XI where they get bowled out for 54 by a kid with one first-class match to his name. And try to figure how this side then fronted up against four bowlers with more than 1,600 Test wickets, and a top seven with 66 centuries and more than 25,000 runs, and didn't just win, but turned out a Mortal Kombat flawless victory in which they did not lose a single session across the full four days.

As is always the case when an underdog wins, celebration of one side will be offset by knives coming out for the other. A team as well supplied as Australia simply cannot drop matches like this without repercussions, at least from supporters, even if selectors do as past behaviour suggests and stand by their side. Still, though the angst is doubtless flowing among a portion of the national fanbase, there aren't a lot of obvious candidates to blame. Of those under most question before the match, Cameron Green came good with a century that for a while gave Australia a chance for revival, Marnus Labuschagne built well for an hour and a half before making an error, and Jake Weatherald had a bad Test, as openers are especially wont to do.

While administrators have looked down their noses against Bangladesh, Australia's players this past week can't be accused of the same. They would have expected to win, of course, but that doesn't mean they weren't ready to do the work to make that happen. There was no complacency in their comments before the game or their conduct during it. There were errors, chasing the angle or playing the wrong line, or chopping on due to angled bats, and that will renew the usual debates about rustiness and match-play prep. But nobody got out to contemptuous slogs. Nobody took it easy in the field. The fast bowling had some good new-ball bursts and old-ball discipline. Nathan Lyon lacked pep, but he hasn't played since the Nixon administration. The Australians didn't take this match for granted. They just weren't good enough, and got soundly beaten by a team that was.

Nobody who has watched Bangladesh's quarter century of Test cricket would have expected this win. Hence the scale of the upset. What Bangladesh have also done is to overturn that expectation, perhaps for good. They have proved to themselves that they can play this way, they have dragged Australia off top spot in the World Test Championship, and they have a chance to go again in the second Test. Australia desperately need to win that, to settle nerves. But whatever happens in Mackay, Darwin will stand.

It demands that Bangladesh be brought in from the periphery. Having not played in England for 17 years, England's next summer grants them a single Test. Australia are unlikely to have marked them down for the next future tours programme, having hosted them in the current cycle. India took 24 years to invite them over. If the sport is to flourish, nations with potential must be given time and space to grow. This week Bangladesh showed what they have been able to build on their own. The more help they are given, the more they could lift the global game. In the last week, they already have.

> *As is always the case when an underdog wins, celebration of one side will be offset by the knives coming out for the other*

▲ *Australia captain Pat Cummins (centre) is given out in the second innings*
JAMES ROSS/AAP IMAGE/AP

Prince Harry
Brook missed out on top job but can come of age in Test side

Ali Martin *Page 38* →

Equal fights
Chantelle Cameron on why boxing must change

Interview *Page 34* →

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Sport

“I had a glass of champagne and a KFC and it was amazing’
Amy Hunt on four golds, fame and fortune

Sean Ingle *Page 33* →

ALEX LIVESEY/BRITISH ATHLETICS/GETTY IMAGES

Boehly and Walter open to selling their Chelsea shares

Matt Hughes

The Chelsea chair, Todd Boehly, and director Mark Walter are considering selling their shares in the club to the majority owners, Clearlake Capital, in a deal that would give the private equity company complete control at Stamford Bridge.

Clearlake, whose investment is managed by Behdad Eghbali and José E Feliciano, already owns more than 60% of Chelsea, but in an unusual arrangement agreed when buying the club from Roman Abramovich four years ago, they share operational control with a consortium led by Boehly, who along with Walter and Hansjörg Wyss each own about 13%.

The two ownership groups have been locked in a stalemate for almost two years when reports first emerged that they were seeking to buy each other out following a disagreement over strategy, particularly regarding their plans for a new stadium.

Discussions over a potential deal, which would value the club at more than £5bn, have resumed over the past few weeks however, as first reported by the Financial Times, as Walter is seeking to raise funds to pay off insurers following a US federal investigation over alleged tax fraud.

Boehly and Walter are close friends as well as longstanding business partners, having previously invested together in the LA Dodgers Major League Baseball team and the LA Sparks WNBA franchise.

Together with Wyss, the pair control 38% of Chelsea through Blueco 22 Holdings, although it is unclear whether the Swiss billionaire is also willing to sell. Under the terms of their £2.5bn purchase from Abramovich, none of Chelsea’s shareholders can sell to a third party without the consent of their partners.

An external sale is therefore unlikely, putting Clearlake in a strong position to gain the complete control it has been seeking for some time.

▲ *Todd Boehly’s group and Clearlake have been in a stalemate*

The bleep test
Player and referee audio to be broadcast in Premier League

Exclusive
Matt Hughes

The Premier League will permit audio of on-field conversations between players and referees during live broadcasts for the first time this season.

The use of audio by the Premier League’s domestic TV rights holders, Sky Sports and TNT Sports, is part of an expansion of the RefCam system, which became a permanent feature of top-flight coverage last season after a six-week trial at the start of the campaign. The head-mounted RefCams were used by broadcasters to provide near-instant replays of match incidents from a new angle in an attempt to enhance the viewer experience, but under the terms of their agreement with clubs the audio captured by the cameras was not televised until several days later.

The use of audio is part of an expansion of the RefCam system *

The regulations will be relaxed this season, however, to permit a limited use of RefCam audio during live matches, with one or two incidents to be broadcast from each of the Premier League’s 38 match rounds.

The audio will not be broadcast live or include any incidents that are referred to the video assistant referee, as that is not permitted under the laws of the game, which are set by the International Football Association Board (Ifab). The new audio offering will be made available as part of near-live instant replays, however, while the number of TV games featuring RefCam will increase from 20 to about 45.

Football has been slow to replicate the broadcasting innovations embraced by other sports, with in-match interviews and dressing room cameras long accepted in cricket and both codes of rugby, as well as many American sports. Under increasing pressure from rights holders, football is belatedly looking to open up.

The Premier League and refereeing body Pro Ref – formerly PGMOL – are understood to be lobbying Ifab over relaxing the rules that prevent live audio from being broadcast.